

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**INDUSTRY**

## LAY-OFFS—EFFECT ON SUMMER EMPLOYMENT OF STUDENTS

with representatives of Francophones outside Quebec about plans the association has been fostering for a long time about a joint commission, and according to the association's president, the minister seemed to agree to the establishment of such a commission. Could the minister tell the House if he is in favour of establishing such a joint commission and if he is, whether he recommended it, and when we can expect to have an answer to the question?

**Hon. Francis Fox (Secretary of State and Minister of Communications):** Madam Speaker, as the hon. member has mentioned, I had the pleasure of meeting with representatives of the Federation of Francophones outside Quebec some time ago to discuss the matter of establishing an appropriate consultative forum between the federation and the Government of Canada. In the near future I intend to meet once again with spokesmen for the federation for further discussions with a view to establishing a suitable consultation mechanism. The federation wished to meet with me this week, but as it is impossible for me I agreed to meet them some time next week.

**Mr. La Salle:** Madam Speaker, I wish to address a supplementary to the minister.

I would like the Secretary of State to be a bit more specific if possible. I know to what extent Francophones outside Quebec are relying on him to make an explicit recommendation. As the minister gave the federation this opinion during one of their meetings, could the minister at least inform the House that he favours the setting up of this commission? He knows which one I mean, in view of the fact that the federation's president said she was concerned about some information to the effect that the government might be tempted to change its mind. Could the minister assure the House that the government does not intend to do so? Could the minister assure the House that he endorses the setting up of this commission, an urgent matter in my opinion?

**Mr. Fox:** Madam Speaker, the government does not intend in the least to change its mind as it has never promised to set up a joint commission comprised of members of the government and the Federation of Francophones outside Quebec. The hon. member will remember no doubt that this type of suggestion or agreement had been favoured by his government during the electoral period in an endeavour to elicit votes from certain Francophone circles outside Quebec, a tactic which by the way did not give any results.

Madam Speaker, for our part, I do not think there has ever been any doubt as to our commitment with regard to Francophones outside Quebec either from a constitutional or government policy point of view.

**Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. In recent weeks there have been lay-offs of more than 1,000 workers every working day. As a result of these lay-offs, the opportunities for summer employment for students has dropped by 20 per cent, according to Manpower centres in southwestern Ontario.

● (1450)

I wonder whether the minister has any immediate plans to deal with this problem of lay-offs which is having such an adverse effect on employment of students for this coming summer.

**Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce):** Madam Speaker, we are very concerned about these lay-offs, and that is why we are developing industrial strategy programs to strengthen the entire industrial base of the country.

We have to recognize, however, that to some extent our problem is due to the weakness of the economy of our major trading partner, the United States. Even though we are putting forward efforts to blunt the impact of that situation, unfortunately we cannot escape it entirely.

**Mr. Orlikow:** My supplementary question is to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Given the fact that we have almost 500,000 young people up to age 25 unemployed, and that the number of young people unemployed has increased by 70,000 in the last month, does the Department of Employment have any plans for employment programs which will put our young people to work for the summer, who need work so desperately if they are to be able to go back to universities and community colleges?

**Mr. Dennis Dawson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member certainly knows that there is a transition period during the months of May, June and July concerning the students who are finishing their studies before getting into the labour market. Traditionally, it has been during the month of June that the unemployment statistics have been a little higher, but when we get to July and August these statistics come down.

I am quite sure that with the programs established by this government we shall be able to increase the number of students working during this summer, not only in the government programs but in the private sector.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!