

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, of course we are concerned about any layoff, in particular a layoff of the nature referred to by the Hon. Member. I can only tell the Hon. Member at this time that we will be having discussions with the company to see if there is some realistic way to avert this layoff and other possible layoffs in related companies.

[Translation]

ASSISTANCE TO VERSATILE-DAVIE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, two months ago, the Minister approved a loan of \$15 million for Versatile-Davie to cover capital costs until work would begin on the Canadian destroyers.

My supplementary is as follows: Does the Minister intend to be as attentive to the needs of the shipyard's 1,600 employees, for whom the shipyard is one of two major sources of employment in this part of Quebec? This is a matter of great importance to many Quebecers.

[English]

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, surely the Hon. Member realizes that our attempts to keep the shipyard open, and particularly to give it the kind of contracts that he has referred to, were very much in the interest of workers in that shipyard. I think he should be standing up congratulating us.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance, the Frank Miller look alike. In November the Minister of Finance said that his Government could have made more decisions and taken more action, but to do so in the absence of full consultation would undermine the effectiveness of his Government's economic plans. Will the Minister be true to his word and give an unequivocal undertaking to the House that no changes will be made to the Unemployment Insurance Act, or its regulations, before there has been full consultation with the Canadian public?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member should have some confidence in me. Let him wait until next Thursday and I think he will be able to make up his own mind.

MINISTER'S CONSULTATIONS

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, with regard to specific provisions of the Unemploy-

ment Insurance Act, particularly those dealing with sickness, fishermen, and individuals who cannot work because of pregnancy, will the Minister indicate to the House whether he has had any consultations on those three areas of the Unemployment Insurance Act? Is he telling the House that he is prepared to move on those, thus deviating from the Prime Minister's commitment that universal social programs are a sacred trust?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, using the expression I have applied to other members of the Hon. Member's Party, the Hon. Member is trying to use the politics of fear. Let him wait until next Thursday. If he thinks about it, I believe he will be able to make up his mind in an appropriate way. There has been full consultation by my colleague, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, and myself, on a wide range of issues surrounding the topics that he has raised. I can assure him that we have a great deal of sensitivity toward the fishermen and women who would be affected by any changes. The Hon. Member should wait until next Thursday.

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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

SUBMISSIONS TO EQUALITY RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. Yesterday he stated that he had no knowledge of the January gag order issued by the NDHQ to members of the Armed Forces who might want to appear before the committee on the important issues of equality rights. Now that the Minister has reviewed this matter, will he tell the House his policy with respect to the appearance of the members of the Armed Forces? Specifically, will he inform all members of the Armed Forces that they are free to make written or verbal submissions to the committee without any possible present or future adverse impact on their careers in the Canadian Armed Forces?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I answered that question yesterday. I would be delighted to appear before the committee, if that is what the committee wishes. They simply have to get in touch with me.

With respect to the officials, there are well recognized procedures with respect to officials in the Department, whether they be military or civilian, appearing before committee members.

Mr. Robinson: The Minister has not answered the question.

APPEARANCES BEFORE COMMITTEE

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, there are 83,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces. Is each man and woman in the Armed Forces free to appear, without any possible repercussions, before the equality rights committee to