

Oral Questions

REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER PROMOTE MANITOBA SITE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, the Government continues to maintain that there has been no request from Manitoba, no proposal. But that simply is not the case.

If the Minister is serious about this level playing field, will the Prime Minister be making a statement to the effect that he is prepared to promote, to use the words the Minister used here in the House, Manitoba as a site for equal consideration? We know what equal consideration means. We got that with the CF-18.

Is the Prime Minister willing to promote Manitoba as a site in the same way that he is willing to promote Sept-Îles?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member keeps on referring obliquely to the fact that there is a kind of competition here. There is no competition. It is not a question of Manitoba versus Quebec. There can easily be two smelters. There is easily the potential for two smelters and we will consider both requests on an equal basis. Everybody will be treated equitably in this question. There is no difficulty with that.

All I am saying is that we will wait until we have the full documentation on both projects and, if they both go ahead, so much the better. It will mean more jobs throughout Canada.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Regional and Industrial Expansion.

On what basis does he make the claim that there is no competition between these two proposals? Does the Minister have a study that is available to the House and to the various Governments that shows the rationale behind the Prime Minister's statement in Quebec and the rationale behind the Minister's statement here today that there is no competition?

Is there any intelligence behind this, or is it just the electioneering of the Prime Minister in Quebec, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know whether the Hon. Member opposite is against this kind of project anywhere in the country.

We are going to deal with the requests that we receive when we receive them, on an equal and equitable basis. We must have the requests in before we can give an answer, and we do not have them.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that these requests will be dealt with equitably whether they be in Québec, in Manitoba, in B.C., in Newfoundland or in any other province in this

country. There is room for more than one. We have no problems with that. It is a level playing field. We will look at the requests as they come in and hopefully we will be able, through the initiative of private investors in this area, to create more jobs throughout the country again.

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[Translation]

FREE TRADE

CLOSURE OF SIMONDS PLANT IN GRANBY—REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade and is further to the questions I asked him yesterday about the 131 victims of the spirit of free trade who were laid off by the Simonds Company.

This morning, the workers read the Minister's advertising, which says, "Let's be prepared to take advantage of free trade. Canadians are getting ready for free trade and the Government of Canada is there to help them."

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 131 Simonds workers, what is the Canadian Government prepared to do for those who are losing their jobs because the plant is being transferred to the United States, according to the good principles of free trade? What is the Government ready to announce for these workers?

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, as I surmised yesterday the Hon. Member's facts were entirely wrong. The company in question, which is known as Simonds Industries Inc., has four plants.

It has two plants in the U.S. and two in Canada. For reasons of economy and efficiency the company has decided to close one in Canada to consolidate operations in the east, and to close one in Portland, Oregon, consolidating its production in the west in the company's plant in Vancouver, B.C. The company will end up with two plants instead of four, one in Vancouver and one in the United States, rather than having four plants.

In addition, I am told that Toronto will be the location for a new warehouse and distributing centre for the company as well as being the site of the Canadian head office, and that a president has been appointed for the Canadian company.

It is a complete tissue of fabrication that the plant in question is closing because of any connection to the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement. Tell the truth. If you are going to go to the people, start to learn to tell the truth.

[Translation]

Mr. Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, I think that is some consolation prize for the 131 unemployed workers to know that there will