

Oral Questions

Given the extent of his budget problem, how can the minister deliberately spare the banks, which made over \$4 billion in profits last year, by requiring from them a symbolic, temporary effort of only \$100 million?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the \$100 million tax is in addition to the large corporations tax, which we raised in our last budget. There is also the corporate tax that the banks are paying. I must point out to the hon. member that, if we look at government revenues, the fastest growing source of revenue is the taxes collected from large corporations.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister tells us that he has asked the banks to make an effort, so I would remind him that the effort he requires from the unemployed is 120 times bigger than for the banks.

An hon. member: Shame!

Mr. Loubier: One hundred and twenty times bigger! That is his definition of fairness. So the question I am asking him is this: How does the minister explain his refusal to honour his election commitment, as reported in the *Globe and Mail*, to establish a real minimum tax on corporate profits, when CP, with profits of \$422 million, did not pay a single cent in tax?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, there is a minimum corporate tax, which, incidentally, we increased in our last budget. I must, however, tell you that we did not raise personal taxes in our last budget, and I would ask the hon. member to tell the chief of the head office in Quebec City, Mr. Parizeau, not to raise personal taxes, as he threatened to do a couple of days ago.

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[English]

LABOUR

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour.

The current railway labour dispute is now a national lockout. West coast ports are also shut down due to a longshoremen's strike. Every few years we go through this fiasco where both sides know back to work legislation is inevitable. Unfortunately Canadian jobs and other industries are at stake.

Will the minister put an end to this charade and legislate everyone back to work now?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we must look at each work situation from a different perspective and not lump airports, harbours and railways all

together. They are different companies and labour relations vary from one to the other.

We are keeping abreast of these situations. As you know, Mr. Speaker, regarding railways, even CP was able to reach an agreement in principle with some workers. The situation which is of most concern to me now is that of the port of Vancouver, which we are following on an hourly basis, and I hope that the parties will go back to the negotiating table.

[English]

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour may have time to wait to sort this out but Canadian farmers do not.

Present shipments are in danger. They must plan for future crops now and should not have to worry about whether the rail system will be there when they need it.

I ask the minister again. When will the government introduce back to work legislation? When?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Reform member to remain calm and to refrain from spreading panic among the parties concerned. As we speak, grain is moving in the west, in Vancouver this very day.

• (1425)

We should keep in contact with the parties and keep in mind that it is always better to negotiate an agreement than to envision legislating these people back to work.

[English]

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we have been calm far too long. When is the time to get nervous? It is right now. To date there have been 13 work stoppages in 29 years. Our western grain growers cannot afford to bear the brunt of another strike. Canada's transportation system must be reliable or our customers will go elsewhere.

Once the back to work legislation is passed, will the government take steps to ensure the threat of future rail strikes is removed once and for all?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as usual, the hon. member is going a bit too fast. At this stage, legislation is out of the question, so I will not answer hypothetical questions.

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FISHERIES

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The stalemate persists in the dispute over turbot fishing opposing Canada and the European Union. Yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs