

Oral Questions

● (1450)

DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg-Assiniboine): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister if he would supply these veterans who are having this cancer problem with information about the same routine Colonel Browne used when he was able to obtain his pension because he contracted cancer 12 years ago? Will the minister distribute that information to those veterans immediately?

Hon. W. Bennett Campbell (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member is aware, we are more than happy to assist any veteran in making his application to the commission. I am not completely familiar with the process used by the gentleman in question, but I am certainly prepared to advise our pension advocates and the various organizations which support veterans' applications to the commission, of the specific details.

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AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

INCREASE IN IMPORTATION OF JAPANESE MANUFACTURED VEHICLES

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. With 18,000 Canadian auto workers laid off, in addition to another 38 per cent of those who at one time were employed in the auto parts business in Canada, is the Prime Minister aware that last year Japanese truck imports were up 106 per cent compared with the year before, that car imports from that country were up 26 per cent, and that that compares with Japanese truck imports into the United States which fell 8 per cent and car imports which fell 3 per cent? If the Prime Minister is aware of that rather startling difference between Canada and the United States, would he agree that the two agreements, the one between Japan and the United States and the one between Canada and Japan, have not worked to the advantage of Canada?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I must confess that I do not know the details of those statistics, but it does not seem to me that the conclusion stated by the hon. member follows from the premise. There are many other circumstances which could explain Canada's difficult economic situation, and the main one I can think of is the high rate of inflation and the fact that we are no longer competitive with many of our competitors. That is why we believe it is the first task of this government to bring the inflation rate down. That is why we made a concrete suggestion in that direction to the first ministers' meeting last week. It is a suggestion which I also put to members of the opposition, and I wish they would give it their considered thinking.

NEGOTIATION OF IMPORT QUOTA LIMITATIONS

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, undoubtedly the Prime Minister is aware that representatives of his government are now in Japan negotiating a new arrangement with respect to auto imports from Japan into this country, and bearing in mind that last year 23 per cent of the auto sales in Canada were Japanese cars, would the Prime Minister indicate whether his delegation intends to have trucks included for the first time in any import limitations? Second, may we anticipate a lower quota than the 174,000 which was supposed to be the limit under the existing contract?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I was aware of this meeting in Tokyo. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce referred to it at last week's conference. I am not aware of the details of the negotiations, nor whether trucks are being discussed at that meeting. I will be happy to take notice on behalf of the minister, but I must repeat to the hon. member that, over the longer run, the salvation of the economy will not come by reducing international trade or by increasing protectionism one against the other.

Mr. Stevens: Tell that to the unemployed.

Mr. Trudeau: Canada's future as an exporting nation must essentially be in the direction of remaining competitive, and I repeat my previous statement to the hon. member that unless we agree amongst ourselves in this country to fight together the evil of inflation rather than looking at short-term painlessness, we will not be successful in breaking into international markets on a larger scale than we have.

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[Translation]

FORESTRY

INQUIRY WHETHER PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE WILL BE OFFERED TO NEW BRUNSWICK

Mr. Herb Breau (Gloucester): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. In view of the joint announcement which he made today with the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources concerning a program to help Ontario forestry workers, would the minister tell the House whether this program could apply to other regions, and more specifically, whether there have been any discussions with the government of New Brunswick, where this industry is also facing very serious problems?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I was very pleased today to be able to announce an agreement with the province of Ontario in relation to the provision of joint assistance that will bring several thousand forestry workers in that province back to employment in the very important areas of reforestation and development of the forest industries. I can tell the hon.