

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for bringing this to my attention. I share his concern. I will bring this matter to the Security and Investigation Branch of Canada Post Corporation for its review and recommendations.

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GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

OPENING OF OFFICE IN BARBADOS

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. I would like to know whether or not the Prime Minister gave his permission for the Christmas-in-Barbados junket undertaken at the taxpayers' expense by the Hon. Member for Dartmouth in order to open an office which has been open for the last six months?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I saw the report in this morning's press, the one to which the Hon. Member is apparently referring. The matter will be the subject of inquiry to see whether or not the accuracy level of it is of the same standards as the accuracy level of several other similar stories that have come out in the last several months.

TRAVEL BY MINISTERS AND MEMBERS

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, Canadian government officials in Barbados confirmed today that the trip was organized at a time when the Member was probably going to be in the Barbados anyway at his own family hideaway. I would ask the Prime Minister, in light of the fact that he is asking the women and children of the country to pay through cut-backs in the increases in family allowances, how he can justify April in Paris, July and August on safari, and Christmas in the Barbados for his own Members of Parliament.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): And Taiwan for Boudria.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney: I want to know if he is going to send a cheque for \$15,000 back to the Government of Canada.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I would like an answer to my question. The women and children of this country want an answer.

Some Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Copps: This is the House of Commons and you're ripping off taxpayers. It's a taxpayers' rip-off.

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It is indeed the House of Commons.

Ms. Copps: Well, answer!

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Nickel Belt.

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NATIONAL REVENUE

FORMER CAPE BRETON EMPLOYEES—REQUEST FOR TAX REMISSION

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue. It refers to the closure by the Government of the heavy water plants on Cape Breton Island. As a result of those closures, 630 workers have lost their jobs and they will lose up to 60 per cent of their severance package to income tax. Will the Minister tell the House whether or not he will grant the tax remission to those workers that they have requested?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the concerns of my colleague. As he knows, we met with some of the employees last October and I would like to point out to the Hon. Member and to the House that the severance package offered by AECL is an equitable one and that there is a measure of tax relief available to those employees either by using contributions to a Registered Retirement Savings Plan or a Registered Pension Plan. I can only assure the Hon. Member that we will consider studying the situation.

I would like to remind the Hon. Member and the House that the Government, led by the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion, is doing something far more practical. We are making extraordinary efforts to provide alternative jobs for the people of Cape Breton, which in the end is the most practical solution.

REQUEST FOR MINISTERIAL CONSIDERATION

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Obviously that is where the log jam lies. I would like to give the Minister a chance to be Santa Claus. In light of the fact that these workers face a very bleak future while at this time we are lucky enough to have jobs, will the Minister of Finance give the serious consideration that was given by the Prime Minister to the workers of Gagnon, to a tax remission for these 630 workers from an area in which the chances of getting a job are very, very bleak indeed? Can he at least do that for them?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the Hon. Member knows, I have had a number of discussions with the Hon. Member for Cape Breton Highlands-Canso on this particular matter and we are reviewing the question very carefully. I would ask the Hon. Member not to spread these negative doubts about the future of Cape Breton.