

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

REPAYMENT OF OVERPAYMENTS—POSSIBILITY OF CEILING ON AMOUNT IF ERROR MADE BY COMMISSION

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. Owing to the fact that many unemployment insurance overpayments are the result of errors made by the Unemployment Insurance Commission and also due to the fact that these overpayments are often in excess of \$1,000, is the minister considering putting a ceiling on the amount of the benefits a recipient must repay if the error is entirely the fault of the Unemployment Insurance Commission?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, by far the bulk of the so-called overpayments are the result of control action taken after the payment, not as a result of error on the part of the commission. However, even in the case where there may have been a clerical error the act requires us to collect these overpayments. We try to arrange with the claimant subject to the repayment the most reasonable method of repayment spread over a period of time.

FINAL REPORT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BENEFIT CONTROL PROGRAM

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. I should like to ask the minister how long he has had the second report from the advisory committee to the Unemployment Insurance Commission and why it has not yet been tabled?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I think I personally received it last Tuesday or Wednesday. I met with the advisory committee yesterday and I tabled the report just a few minutes ago.

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[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

ASSISTANCE TO SMALL BUSINESSES—INDUSTRIAL DECENTRALIZATION

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion.

Since statistics show that small enterprises employ 60 per cent of wage earners in Canada, can the minister tell the House whether his department's policy will better favour small industry development by giving special consideration to the allocation of grants as well as to the industrial decentralization in order to bring closer together the small industry and the abundant manpower to be found in rural community?

[English]

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, basically the hon. gentleman has outlined what I have said on several occasions is

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of the objectives of the reorganization. I am still primarily concerned with manufacturing and processing and to that extent I hope to change the ground rules through which small business can participate. Whether we can extend that form of assistance to service industries is something that is still being discussed with the provinces.

[Translation]

AMOUNT OF INVESTMENT FOR COMPANIES TO QUALIFY FOR ASSISTANCE

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question.

Would the minister tell the House whether in the legislation he intends to introduce he is considering softening the rules and lowering the minimum amount to be invested before anyone may benefit from this legislation?

[English]

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, if in using the word "softening" it is meant that we would reduce, for instance, the amount of fixed capital costs that would be required for assistance, the answer is that this is precisely the course that is now being considered.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

DISCUSSION BY MINISTER WITH SOVIET GOVERNMENT OF ARAB OIL EMBARGO AGAINST NATIONS SUPPORTING ISRAEL—SHIPMENT OF ARMS TO ARAB NATIONS BY RUSSIA

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, normally I would not have to ask this question of the Secretary of State for External Affairs but yesterday, instead of giving a report to the House concerning his discussions with Gromyko, he simply tabled a communiqué. I would ask the minister whether, during his discussions with Gromyko, he had anything to say concerning the oil embargoes that were then threatened if not actually imposed by the Arab nations against those countries that show any affinity for Israel? Was that subject discussed and, if so, did the minister call upon the U.S.S.R., apparently the custodian of the thinking of the Arab nations, to have these nations refrain from this type of international blackmail?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I did have some discussions with the representatives of the Soviet government when I was in Russia last week. At that time I repeated to the Soviet authorities the same argument that I had given here in the House of Commons and which I believe are supported on all sides, namely, that it is dangerous to use economic weapons as an instrument of political pressure.

● (1440)

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, again I dislike to ask this question, but we should have had a report. What was the reaction of the representatives of the U.S.S.R. to whom he spoke, and did he at the same time point out the serious