

Oral Questions

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, in acknowledging the opinion expressed by the European Community and the United States that the Canadian offer is not satisfactory at the present stage, I should add that Canada has expressed its opinion to other partners that their offers are not satisfactory. For example, the hon. member has referred to the question of increasing markets for fish products of Canada. Up to the present time we do not feel we have received from the major markets we have in mind the kind of response we will need in order to have a successful negotiation.

● (1417)

With regard to the specifics of the hon. member's question, the exceptions, and so on, the offer made by the various countries generally is confidential. I will examine the situation to see whether I can provide the hon. member with more detailed information within that general concept.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, in a speech of November 29, 1977, which was ignored by the government—as usual—the Minister of Agriculture made several good points. This is not usual, I will admit. He said there should be more involvement from the non-government sector in the trade negotiations at GATT and that representatives of commodity organizations and industrial associations should sit in at the GATT negotiations. Has the government taken that advice? Will it now take that advice of the Minister of Agriculture, or will it continue to ignore the Minister of Agriculture, as is usually the case?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I do not acknowledge the premise of the hon. member's question, or his conclusion. The Minister of Agriculture has made a very remarkable contribution to the preparation of the Canadian position at GATT.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: It has not been our intention, from the beginning, to include sector representatives in the negotiations themselves; we believe a small team conducting the negotiations is the most effective way. But we have been prepared to provide confidential briefings to the representatives of the various sectors which are affected. For example, we have made it possible for representatives of the Canadian Labour Congress to go to Geneva and to be briefed by our delegation on the spot. That offer would apply to industry and agriculture, as I explained in reply to a question which was asked last week.

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[Translation]

INDUSTRY

SITUATION OF CERTAIN QUEBEC INDUSTRIES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, I want to put a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. It deals with tariff matters and with 150,000 jobs

and workers in the province of Quebec, particularly workers in the textile, clothing, footwear and furniture industries.

In view of the fact that 34,000 jobs have been lost in the Canadian industry between October 1976 and October 1977, including 30,000 in the province of Quebec, particularly in the industries I have just mentioned, why is it, according to government guidelines contained in a document I have here, that the minister states that the textile, clothing, furniture and footwear industries, as a result of tariff negotiations, will disappear?

[English]

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what document the hon. member has at hand, but I can assure him and the House that we will do our utmost to see the textile, furniture and footwear industries have ample opportunity for expansion within Canada. In saying that, I should like to inform the hon. member that while manufacturing jobs decreased from 1976 to perhaps the middle of 1977, statistics now suggest that in the first quarter of 1978 manufacturing jobs in Canada increased by 9,000.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Grafftey: Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Finance. But first I should like to read this government documentation which states in part that the government's main purpose must be above all to achieve progressive reduction through increased rationalization of the corporations involved and a minimum of assistance during the transition period.

Mr. Speaker, how will the Minister of Finance explain to Quebecers this long term policy which calls for the disappearance of these industries? As far as jobs are concerned, what alternatives does the minister propose for Quebec workers?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I suggest the hon. member disregards very important facts, namely that when I was acting as minister of industry, trade and commerce in 1976, we introduced a quota system in Canada, to ensure a more equitable sharing between imports and Canadian goods. This policy served as an excellent stabilizing factor on the textile and footwear industries in Canada.

The hon. member would be well advised to consult his colleagues on his side of the House who never stop complaining that we impose too many quotas, with the result, they claim, that importers in a number of Canadian cities are compelled to limit their turnover.