

Oral Questions

DEPARTMENTAL POLICY

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I am not asking about the partisan nature, I have my own opinion on that. Is it appropriate when the need for a program is identified, and there are growing lay-offs occurring, to offer assistance only in that area if the province will agree to speedy negotiation of some other program unrelated, separate, and apart?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, approval for the planning stages of the Community Futures Program in the Acadian peninsula was announced in February of this year, long before that memo was ever written. Since that time, I may tell the Hon. Member that total funding going into the Acadian peninsula under the Canadian Jobs Strategy is some \$1,339,000 and that 270 individuals are taking part in it. We are moving forward on those programs.

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[Translation]

TRADE

INQUIRY WHY PRIME MINISTER DOES NOT DO MORE TO DEFEND
THE INTERESTS OF QUEBECERS

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Yesterday, in Quebec City, the Prime Minister announced that as a result of his Government's dramatic drop in the ratings, he would try and do a better job of selling his "salade" to Quebecers. Could the Minister explain why the Prime Minister, in the letter he sent to the President of the United States, did not do a better job of defending the interests of Quebec workers in the softwood and lumber industries? Why did he prefer to sell his "salade", his image, instead of selling the interests of Quebec workers?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I don't want to talk about "salads" with the Hon. Member, because he is far more experienced than I am in talking about these matters.

As far as the so-called content of his question is concerned, I think it is quite clear that thanks to the policies of this Government and our Prime Minister, we have seen unparalleled job creation, in Quebec and elsewhere, and in a manner far more effective than was the case under the Government that more or less enjoyed the support of the former Member.

Mr. Malépart: Mr. Speaker, as far as the word "salade" is concerned, I was merely quoting what his Prime Minister said yesterday in Quebec City.

DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister explain, now that we know how often this Government and this Prime Minister have been defeated since the beginning of the talks on free trade, how he

expects Canadians to have confidence in a Prime Minister who claims to be an expert negotiator, when his record has been a disaster since the beginning of these talks?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, speaking of these talks, perhaps I may mention an area where problems have been particularly acute here in Canada, and I am referring to relations between the federal Government and the provinces. Under the previous Government, this was a total disaster. Under the Government of the Prime Minister, the Hon. Member for Manicouagan, we have had one success after another. This week, we managed to reach a consensus with all provincial premiers and all Canadian parties on continuing negotiations.

[English]

PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER TO UNITED STATES PRESIDENT

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Could he explain to the House and to the people of Canada what the purpose of the "Dear Ron" letter was that the Prime Minister sent to President Reagan earlier this week?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, assuming the letter were to be tabled and published, the Member could—

Mr. Riis: It is published.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): It has been published, excuse me. The purpose of communications between the Chief of Government of Canada and the Chief of Government of the United States is naturally two-fold: to advance specific issues and to maintain a relationship that has been very important to this country.

Some specific issues are raised in other fora. The question of the grave concern of Canada about the softwood industry was raised in other fora. Some questions are not appropriate to be raised in a letter from the Prime Minister to the President. For example, the Member's colleague suggested that the Prime Minister should make a legal case, not because he is a good lawyer, which he is, but because he is a political figure. The NDP is asking that a political case be made that would prejudice Canada—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is a long answer. A supplementary question?

CONTENT OF LETTER

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Considering what the Minister just said that the communiqué is an opportunity for the Prime Minister of Canada to raise important issues with the President of the United States, would the Secretary of State for External Affairs not agree that perhaps the most important issue this week facing Canada is the softwood issue, and if he was writing a letter this week he should at least have referred to that topic in the letter?