

Oral Questions

• (1455)

Given the urgency of this situation, can the minister pledge to allocate these funds immediately from the \$400 million which he has earmarked for launching new programs?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, if I recall properly, the hon. member was a member of the previous government at the time when the downsizing of that particular industrial operation took place. It would seem to me if there was any urgency with dealing with the problem it should have been dealt with at that time.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, such a pat answer—I was a member of the Conservative Party until 1990. I refer to a situation in the Sorel-Tracy region in 1994, and the only answer I get is an arrogant, typically Liberal response.

I am asking you, Mr. Minister, if you are prepared to re-establish—

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the hon. member to always address his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. Plamondon: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister prepared to re-establish the specific program for mass layoffs, given that the funds required to meet these needs have been drawn from the general account for some time? Can the minister re-establish this mass layoff fund to meet the needs of the Sorel-Tracy region, for example?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, I share the concern of the hon. member for the workers affected. The point I was trying to make is that good industrial labour policy is to establish proper programs at a time when companies begin to downsize, not when it reaches a crisis proportion.

I think the hon. member as a full and active member of this House during the time of the previous government of which he was member should have ensured at that time that those measures were put in place.

At present we will certainly look at the issue. I would suggest—

[Translation]

I would suggest to the member that he is concerned about workers in his riding, so he has asked me a specific question and made specific proposals. It is not by asking questions in the

House. Give me reasons, not a discussion between two people. This is not something you can get through a question.

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[English]

LOBBYISTS

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister announced the appointment of an ethics counsellor. The ethics counsellor is merely a slight expansion of the assistant deputy registrar general's previous role; the same job, the same person, a new name.

The lobby reforms changed tier one and tier two lobbyists into consultant and organization lobbyists; the same role, a new name.

Does the Prime Minister or the deputy really believe that these cosmetic changes will solve the problems of influence peddling in government decision making?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, the level of understanding that was demonstrated by the member in his speech the other day perhaps is explained by the fact that he did not attend the briefing session that we offered Reform members on the bill.

He should know that influence peddling is covered under the Criminal Code where it belongs and where it will stay with other criminal offences.

With respect to both the role of the ethics counsellor and the introduction of the amendments to the Lobbyists Registration Act, we have met the promises that we made in the red book almost item by item. We did retain the distinction between tiers of lobbyists. We put this proposal to a House of Commons committee before second reading hopefully so that somebody on the other side as well as our own members will take the time to study it and make useful proposals. If he has something to offer let him offer it.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to offer that. I would like to know right now whether this government is ready to put some teeth into its actions at the level that it is proposing.

• (1500)

Many believe that the ongoing Pearson negotiations are at least as unethical as the original deal and that the negotiations now deserve to be investigated.

Can we have the assurance that the Prime Minister will direct the ethics counsellor to launch an immediate and total investigation into all of the Pearson negotiations with all of the findings to be made public?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Pearson deal and the cancellation of the agreement, the investigation and the judgment that was brought to that deal by the people of Canada speaks for itself. There are