

Oral Questions

In all transactions such as this there is only one eventual loser, and that is the employee. We have been fighting for the employees of CN Route since the deal collapsed.

Mr. Lawless, Chief Executive Officer of CN, said when he was before the transport committee that CN's people are its greatest asset.

Will the minister confirm to this House today that he will start to treat poor employees from CN Route who have lost their jobs like employees of CN with full pension benefits and the rights of all CN employees?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, there were two options available to the government: close the company down or sell it to the person with the best offer, and that is what the government did.

Mr. Peterson: They don't care.

Mr. Lewis: My hon. friend is suggesting that the Canadian taxpayer should have continued to lose between \$30 million and \$40 million a year. I do not think that is a viable proposition for any government, and definitely not ours.

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CHINA

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Last year all parties in the House supported a motion condemning the brutal use of force and the repression of the Chinese peoples. Canada subsequently placed a number of limited sanctions, but one year later it does seem that it is business as usual between Canada and China. Trade and imports are up.

What is the government doing now to put continuing pressure on the Chinese government to democratize further and to end the repression in China?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, what we are doing now is following the policy I outlined on June 30 last year in response to the events in Tiananmen Square which were, as the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party indicated,

roundly condemned and deeply regretted by all members of the House.

There have been important changes in the rules with respect to export development credit assistance, with respect to the activities of the Canadian International Development Agency, and with respect to the level of visits and contacts between Canada and China.

If the hon. member on behalf of her party is changing her party's position and is suggesting that the government should act to isolate a country which contains one-quarter of the world's population, that would certainly be interesting news to members of the House. She may change her policy. We have not changed ours.

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question which the minister did not answer was simply: What continuing pressure is the government prepared to put on the Government of China? I will ask it again. Amnesty International has released a report indicating continued human rights abuses. It seems to me this should be of some concern to Canada. I am sure it is of concern to the minister.

What is the Canadian government policy to deal with the continuing human rights abuses in China?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we are very much concerned about the continuing human rights abuses in China, and they do continue.

There has been some improvement in at least the legal regime that is being followed in China since the events of a year ago, but it would be misleading and wrong to suggest that there has been a marked improvement in the human rights situation. We continue to make representations as effectively as we can.

I think it is also worth mentioning that while there has been a marked deterioration from the situation in China before the events in Tiananmen Square, there has not been a return—and we think there will not be a return—to the anarchy that marked the situation in China which contributed so much to the threat to human rights that occurred during the period of the cultural revolution.

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. I think the people of China and those in Canada of Chinese origin would like to hear the minister say something specifically regarding his