

Inquiries of the Ministry

• (2:40 p.m.)

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. gentleman a supplementary question. In light of the great amount of information that he has there, obviously relating to a whole series of lay-offs, which does not bespeak very well the government's economic attitudes, would he be prepared to say to the House that on a certain day, say the first or second day of next week, he would be prepared to appear and make a complete statement on motions about the involvement of his department in those areas?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I certainly would not select, from among lay-offs occurring, some as being more important than others. Each lay-off is of extreme importance to the people involved. Therefore I am willing to indicate to hon. members privately or in other ways the state of affairs that applies to each. I am willing to put these things down in writing from time to time as requested.

* * *

• (2:40 p.m.)

[Translation]

LABOUR CONDITIONS

STE. THÉRÈSE, QUEBEC—POSSIBLE FURTHER LAY-OFFS BY GENERAL MOTORS—ASSURANCE OF MAINTENANCE OF PRODUCTION IN CANADA

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Could the minister tell us whether he has received from the General Motors authorities in Ste. Thérèse a statement to the effect that the employees in this plant would not abnormally suffer from adjustments being made?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I had a meeting yesterday with the officials of the company; they have shown me a number of opportunities offered to them in their effort to adjust their production. I am not in a position, of course, to share this with the House, but none of them indicates any shutdown at Ste. Thérèse. As a matter of fact, all possibilities considered at this time suggest maximum use of the GM plants in Canada. Since they invested more than half a billion dollars in the last five or six years, General Motors are surely not going to close down their establishments in Canada tomorrow.

[English]

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. As the Minister of Manpower and Immigration has said that he cannot handle all the questions that are posed these days regarding the number of lay-offs taking place in Canada, would the Prime Minister give him a little help so that he can handle this problem?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Minister

of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Could the minister inform the House whether or not the intended cessation of the production of Pontiacs at the Ste. Thérèse plant of General Motors was discussed with the General Motors officers and, if so, did the minister, on behalf of the workers involved in Canada, urge that corporation to ensure that if and when production of that car ceases at Ste. Thérèse, Quebec, the production will be picked up elsewhere in Canada?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, I think the answer I have given implies that very strongly. When I mentioned that the company had no intention of closing any of its establishments I was implying that the company, in readjusting its production, would see to it that all the plants presently in existence would be fully active. Of course I cannot say, and the company says it has not decided—I think it is still in contemplation—where that particular model will be built and where other particular models will be built. This is presently being studied by General Motors.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby on one further supplementary and then pass on to another hon. member.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, my one further supplementary is this: did the minister obtain a commitment from General Motors Corporation to inform him well in advance—by well in advance I mean several months in advance—of their intention to cease production of the Pontiac at Ste. Thérèse, if they so decide?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat what I said yesterday, that usually department communications with these companies are very good. I think we have had an accident de parcours. I do not know how you translate that in English, but I think the company is now more fully aware or realizes better that it is not in its best interests not to provide information, and proper information, and in sufficient time for the government to use in answering questions such as the ones that were asked of me two days ago. There is no doubt that there were a number of aspects of this matter in which it would have been useful for me to have the information. I think the company realizes that now better than ever.

* * *

LABOUR RELATIONS

SUGGESTED INTERVENTION OF MINISTER IN STRIKE AT AMERICAN SMELTING AND REFINING COMPANY

Mr. Ambrose Hubert Peddle (Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Labour. Will the minister advise the House if any approach has been made to his department by either the United Steel Workers Union or the American Smelting and Refining Company of Buchans, Newfoundland, or by the premier or government of Newfoundland, with regard to the possible intervention of the minister in the strike which has left 550 miners at Buchans idle since June of this year?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman was kind enough to serve me notice,