

Oral Questions

serious problem, as I indicated yesterday Labour Canada officials are looking into the books of the company and will make an audit and make sure that all provisions of the Canada Labour Code have been respected.

Mr. MacLellan: I have a copy of the letter that I can give to the Minister today, as well as a copy of the 10-page memo I sent him to back up the allegations I made.

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT ASSIST LAID-OFF WORKERS

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, the Minister is obviously stalling until after the election. That will not wash. The workers are unemployed. What will the Government do to help these laid-off workers? After all, it has given millions of dollars to its friends in big business. It is time now to help these laid-off workers.

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I think we are dealing with a very serious situation. It is not because my colleague sends me a 10-page memo or 20-page memo that makes the facts contained in it true or accurate. I will respond on that particular situation to my hon. colleague.

With respect to the situation today, we have not yet received any group termination notices, but our officials are doing an audit in order to make sure that the Canada Labour Code provisions are respected.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my question which deals with the same topic is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Does the Government not feel it has a moral obligation to the laid-off workers and the private contractors who are losing their jobs as a result of the privatization move of the Government? It has allowed all that asset stripping of CN Route to take place. The company that is doing it is making a profit and there is no protection for those workers or those private contractors. What is the role of the Government?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, when Canadian National sold CN Route in 1986, there were two possible options. Canadian National was losing \$70 million. One option was to close down the business; the other was to sell it, which CN did. What my colleague seems to be suggesting is that CN should then have shut down the business and laid off 2,700 workers.

[English]

REQUESTS FOR MEETINGS WITH MINISTRY

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, the Government has known for months that there was asset stripping. The Minister of Labour received letters in August asking for an immediate meeting about this situation. The Prime Minister has received letters asking for meetings about this. Why did the Government not meet with the people concerned and try to

protect their interests? Why has there been a complete failure to represent the many as it protects the few?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I must remind my colleague that Routes Canada is a private company that was sold in a proper, legal way by Canadian National and for this reason, the present operations of the company . . .

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bouchard: Mr. Speaker, everyone knows the sympathy New Democrats have for workers and we understand why!

So I would simply say this: The company was sold properly. Routes Canada is a private company and until further notice, to my knowledge, based on the published documents, no liquidation or bankruptcy notice was issued. I would ask my colleague to wait and see what happens before making assumptions, probably for purely electoral purposes again!

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TAX REFORM

ACCESS TO PROPERTY OWNERSHIP—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance or, in his absence, to the Prime Minister or another Minister. This morning we heard that the *Association provinciale des constructeurs d'habitations du Québec* had prepared a study of the impact of Phase II of the Government's tax reform and that it had reached the conclusion that after Phase II, a new home would cost the prospective home owner \$8,000 more.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance or his substitute a question: Is this the kind of surprise the Minister has for us in Phase II of his tax reform, and why isn't the Government honest enough to stop this exercise in hypocrisy that will cost every couple that wants to buy a new home \$8,000 more, once the tax reform has been implemented?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, the impact of sales tax reform is impossible to calculate at the present time because we have yet to determine the base and the rate. This means the concerns expressed by the *Association provinciale des constructeurs d'habitations du Québec* are premature to say the least.

TAX ON HOUSES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance said the same thing when we started to talk about the tax on food, and he finally had to reverse his decision. We know that this particular tax will also have an impact on tenants, because according to the Canadian association and