

● (1425)

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I do not need to travel to St. Anthony. If St. Anthony had a credible representative in this House he could report to this House on the situation in St. Anthony, not this ridiculous posturing that there has been a disastrous inshore fishery in Newfoundland this year. That is not a true statement and no facts are given to back it up.

With reference to Newfoundland, this Government is trying to spend \$1 billion in Newfoundland and the other four Atlantic provinces under the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and it was voted against in this House by the hon. gentleman, and stopped in the Senate by the Liberal Party of Canada. Despite that, there have been 132 projects and an expenditure of something like \$40-odd million under that program in Newfoundland and Labrador alone this year. It is the Liberal Party that is the enemy of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Why does the hon. gentleman not announce what district he is going to run in? He does not even have the guts to say he is going to run in his own district. He is getting ready to make a strategic move.

Ms. Copps: Stick to cucumbers, Crosbie.

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[Translation]

FREE TRADE

CLOSURE OF SIMONDS COMPANY IN GRANBY—LOSS OF JOBS FOR NUMEROUS EMPLOYEES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister for International Trade, who challenged my colleague to find a genuine case of human suffering.

Mr. Speaker, last Friday 131 workers at Simonds in Granby were advised that their plant would be closing because Simonds was transferring all its operations to the United States—all in the spirit of free trade—to take advantage of the economies of scale, and that North America would be covered from Pittsburgh, Massachusetts.

I want to ask the Minister for International Trade what kind of program and what kind of reply he has in mind for these 131 workers who are the first 131 victims of free trade.

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, there are no victims of free trade, nor are there likely to be any, particularly if the free trade agreement is passed by this Parliament and goes into effect. There will be

no victims. There will be 26 million Canadian beneficiaries if this agreement goes through.

How can the hon. gentleman get up and ask me a question about victims of free trade when the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement is not even in effect, and when the hon. gentlemen opposite say they are going to see that it is not passed, that they are calling on the Senate to forestall the legislation being passed? They are going to forget the conventions of the Constitution. Next they will call on the Governor General to dismiss the Government and act in the Government's place. That is just as democratic a procedure. Perhaps they will ask the United Kingdom to have the Queen take over there as well.

[Translation]

MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary. Just imagine, you are a man with a family who just got his lay-off notice and you are listening to the Minister's asinine statements . . .

Mr. Speaker, even supporters of free trade . . .

Mr. Speaker: Would the Hon. Member please ask his question?

Mr. Lapierre: My supplementary to the Minister for International Trade is this: What kind of answer does he have for 131 heads of families who, as of November, will no longer have their jobs because their U.S. company has decided to close its branch, in line with the principles of free trade, to take advantage of the economies of scale, the economies of greater volume, and centralize its operations at a simple plant in the United States? What does he have to say to these men who are in their fifties and who have mouths to feed?

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to look at, and it would be interesting to establish, the exact facts with respect to the establishment to which the hon. gentleman is referring. A plant is not closing in Granby or anywhere else because of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. There is no agreement in effect. There might be some employer attempting to use this as an excuse, because blaming somebody else for your own actions, of course, when you are being criticized is always very easy.

I imagine this is a situation comparable to a letter we had from Robert White of the Canadian Auto Workers alleging that a plant in Lindsay, Ontario, was being closed because of the free trade agreement. It turns out that it had nothing at all to do with the free trade agreement and that all 86 employees were being transferred to another plant in Ontario by the same company. That is the kind of despicable tactic that the hon. gentlemen opposite and the NDP are too fond of using.