

Oral Questions

thing in Winnipeg so many times, for instance, with the Air Canada overhaul base. We were told that was not going to be moved. We were told that we were going to get an aerospace training centre. That never materialized.

Are these 250 individuals going to be moved, are they going to be laid off, or is the Minister going to be hiring new individuals in Toronto and Edmonton?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I have already said that this was a temporary action in order to remedy the asbestos danger which exists at the airport. The action being taken is for the very good health of the employees at that airport. The motivation is, of course, an excellent one. As soon as I get the information on how many people will be involved, how long the move will last and when it will take place, I will rush and communicate it to my hon. friend. I will make it a point of honour to do that as soon as I get the information.

* * *

TRADE**RESTRICTIONS ON FOREIGN OWNED BRANCH PLANTS**

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of International Trade. It concerns the tens of thousands of jobs that have been lost over the last few years. I have here with me copies of previously unreleased confidential documents which quote Government officials in the Departments of Industry and Trade, and also Canadian trade commissioners back in the 1950s and 1960s. From these documents we read that a majority of foreign-owned firms have prohibited their Canadian branch plants from exporting from this country, meaning the loss of tens of thousands of jobs. The documents quote recommendations from officials, and also recommendations from Canadian trade commissioners.

Why did the Government throughout the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and into the 1980s, ignore the advice of its own officials and trade commissioners?

● (1425)

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister of State (International Trade)): Madam Speaker, one of the real problems that I will have is answering for the Government in the 1950s and 1960s. I was in provincial government in the 1970s. However, I can say to the Hon. Member that it is certainly our desire to encourage any foreign subsidiaries that are located in Canada to participate fully in export markets. Indeed, in the few months that I have been in this portfolio, I personally have had occasion to discuss that question with some people in the private sector so that that encouragement may be made quite plain.

I think there are many foreign-owned companies that are located in Canada which play a very important part in our export statistics. There may be some that do not fully take

advantage for one reason or another. If the Hon. Member has any specific instances that he wants to talk about, I would be happy to investigate them for him.

Mr. Nystrom: The Minister is now the Minister who is responsible. I remind him that, because of the lack of adequate freedom of information laws, it is difficult to get our hands on all the documents we want. I will send him the file numbers of several documents from which I am quoting today.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Madam Speaker, I think we want straight answers from the Minister because, in the documents I have, there is a quote, for example, from a trade commissioner who said, "Probably 75 per cent of the subsidiary companies have their exports strictly controlled by the parent." I also have a document which quotes a senior officer in the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce who concluded that, "Foreign capital was the biggest problem facing the Department in its endeavours to expand Canada's exports."

Since that kind of advice came from Government officials and since the present Minister in charge of Treasury Board, who was the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce in 1980, failed to have Cabinet look at this again, why has the Government not acted to force branch plants of foreign firms to create jobs in this country and export from Canada to the world market?

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister of State (International Trade)): Madam Speaker, I think the Hon. Member is dealing in simplifications. First, I think he would recognize that there are many companies that have invested in this country from exterior sources that are deeply involved in the export business. The Hon. Member could consider the Province that I come from, for instance. In Nova Scotia, most of the exports which we have been able to achieve in the manufacturing field have been as a consequence of companies locating in Nova Scotia and exporting into other markets, thus creating jobs in our country that otherwise would not have been there.

The situation varies according to the nature of the economy in the different parts of the country. I think it would not be wise, and in the best interests of Canada for achieving development and investment, to have absolute and over-all rule of the type the Hon. Member is suggesting. I think a better policy, and one that I would want to follow, would be to encourage most actively all companies that locate in Canada, to utilize export markets to the very highest degree possible. Again, if the Hon. Member or anyone else wants to talk to me about a specific company that is missing opportunities because of foreign ownership, I would be happy to investigate.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER FORCE BRANCH PLANTS TO EXPORT

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Madam Speaker, the situation does not vary. I will be happy to send some