

Inquiries of the Ministry

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hees: It is because you do not arrange your program.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I point out to the Prime Minister that we are running short of time not only during the session but during the question period.

Mrs. MacInnis: Am I to infer from the Prime Minister's priorities that he is now resigned to a continental policy on abortion?

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CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**SUGGESTION THAT RESPONSIBLE MINISTER MAKE REPRESENTATIONS CONCERNING PRERETIREMENT OF PERSONNEL AND REHIRING PROGRAM**

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. In light of the information provided by the Minister of Supply and Services yesterday that on behalf of the government he had interfered directly in the management of a Crown corporation, Polymer, and as a result notices of termination of employment with that corporation had been cancelled, thus establishing a precedent, I ask the minister whether he would prevail upon the senior officials of the Cape Breton Development Corporation to cease their preretirement of personnel and also commence a rehiring program in the coal mines of Cape Breton where the unemployment rate is in the vicinity of 25 per cent?

• (3:10 p.m.)

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I think that Devco management have acted in accordance with the act adopted by this House and, as we all know, we spend millions of dollars a year trying to maintain employment in the coal mines despite the fact that the House had agreed that the size of labour force in general should be reduced.

[English]

Mr. Muir: May I ask the minister whether it is the intention of the government and the corporation to continue to phase down the coal mines and put people on the streets but not provide any other type of industry and employment for them as the legislation stated was to be done?

[Translation]

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, to my mind, considerable effort has been made to find alternative solutions. Devco now has a new management; I have reason to hope it may find formulas or solutions the other did not, but I feel the hon. member is right. We were to find alternative activities and still hope to be able to do so.

[Mr. Trudeau.]

[English]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION**CHECKING OF GRANTS—REASON FOR GRANT TO STEP LITE MANUFACTURING LIMITED**

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address my question to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. Could he assure the House that his department checks closely the grants that are given to companies to establish in designated or depressed areas?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

Mr. Hales: Could the minister advise the House and the taxpayers of Canada why his department gave a grant of \$216,000 to a company whose principal was heavily in debt in the area which he left, who owes the income tax department money, who owes Ontario Hydro, who owes land taxes, who owes rent—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hees: He must be a Liberal.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hales: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I ask for an explanation from the minister.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That is hardly a point of order.

Mr. Hales: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I have asked the minister a straightforward question on behalf of the taxpayers of this country—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hales:—and I want to know why \$216,000 was given to this firm.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Which firm?

Mr. Hales: I shall take it from a communiqué tabled today. The firm is Step Lite Manufacturing Limited which is going to locate in Renfrew, Ontario. The principal of that firm is heavily in debt to the income tax department, Ontario Hydro and many other people. Why was that money given?

[Translation]

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, the news release did not indicate that we had granted any money. Of course, we promised a subsidy, provided all the other conditions were—

[English]

An hon. Member: There is a difference.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Don't laugh; this is the way it proceeds. It has been proceeding this way all the time. I will inquire into the case and give the hon. member a more detailed answer tomorrow.