

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

MODIFICATION OF BENEFITS—ALLEGED INJUSTICE

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, increasingly, Canadians are wondering what kind of social justice inspired this Government to cut unemployment insurance benefits for 34,000 early retirees who, before January 5, had agreed to early retirement, and lost their jobs and were drawing unemployment insurance benefits. On January 5, the Government decided to cut them off, which meant a loss of \$10,000 for these people. Why did the Government decide to penalize people who were getting pension benefits from their employer's pension plan after losing their jobs?

Members of the military, police forces and other groups of citizens who are obliged to take early retirement and who have paid their unemployment insurance premiums are no longer entitled to those benefits. Why? And what kind of social justice made the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) decide that a person drawing \$300 from his employer's pension plan will lose \$200 in unemployment insurance benefits, while those who are better off and get \$300 a week from a private plan, an RRSP, are entitled to their unemployment insurance benefits?

I urge all Conservative Members to insist that the Prime Minister correct this unfair situation.

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[English]

COMPETITION TRIBUNAL ACT

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S POSITION

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for York-Scarborough (Mr. McCrossan) criticized the NDP, and myself, I suppose, for saying that we would not permit quick passage of the competition Bill. He should know that the independent operators in the oil industry appeared before the committee yesterday with amendments to the Bill. They said if they were not included, the Bill should not be passed. He should know that Professor Stanbury, one of the best experts in the field, has said there are important deficiencies in the Bill. Until those are dealt with we are certainly going to fight that Bill as hard as we can.

S.O. 21

[Translation]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

POSSIBILITY OF \$80 MILLION GRANT TO ELIMINATE POLLUTION OF ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

Mr. Édouard Desrosiers (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve): Mr. Speaker, Wednesday the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) announced that Quebec could expect to receive the same assistance for cleaning up the St. Lawrence as Ontario did for cleaning up the Great Lakes.

Under the previous Liberal Government, Quebec was unfairly excluded from the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement signed by Canada and the United States in 1978. This decision was made despite the fact that the waters of the Great Lakes flow into the St. Lawrence River.

Our government, a Conservative Government that is well represented in Quebec, will soon be taking steps to remedy this situation, and, Mr. Speaker, people are talking about a grant of nearly \$80 million to clean up the St. Lawrence River. I think that is good news.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE

MEETING OF GRAIN EXPORTING COUNTRIES URGED

Mr. Lee Clark (Brandon—Souris): Mr. Speaker, this week several Members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture were in Washington to meet with the newly-appointed Secretary of Agriculture, the Hon. Richard Lyng, Under-Secretary Amstutz, and several congressional leaders. Unfortunately our talks confirmed some of our worst fears. While there is widespread awareness of the impact of the U. S. Farm Bill on Canada and other exporting nations, the United States is clearly determined to meet the EEC exporting nations head-on in what has become the war of the subsidies.

● (1115)

While the future for Canadian agricultural exports is clearly threatened by this all-out trade war, there is a glimmer of hope, Mr. Speaker.

American officials are aware of and applaud the efforts of the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board (Mr. Mayer) to convene a meeting of the exporting nations. American officials also agree that it is extremely important that the "talking process" continue at all levels, including the upcoming round of GATT negotiations. In the meantime we, as a nation, will have to do whatever we can to be of financial assistance to Canadian farmers who will be the unfortunate victims of this trade war.