

Challenge '92 will continue to encourage the hiring of designated group members and the creation of activities designed for these groups.

[English]

TRADE

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I asked a question to the Prime Minister and the minister of science answered the question.

The question was very specific: What did the government anticipate Mexican workers would be able to purchase on \$4.50 per day? The promise of the North American free trade agreement is that we will not only help ourselves, but we will also help the average Mexican worker who will be able to purchase goods from Canada.

I want to cite the minister's answer because it is a dandy. Excuse the poor vocabulary. He said: "At the moment, we have certainly in the automotive industry one-way trade with Mexico. For every car we can bring up here from Mexico, we have to send two and a half to offset this." What the Mexicans will be able to buy from us is two and a half cars. That was the answer. I am seeking perhaps a better response this afternoon.

I was in Mexico the week before last and found out that \$4.50 a day is what hundreds of thousands of Mexicans earn. Just that week, they had signed an accord with labour, business and government. In Mexico, they tend to be one and the same. They signed a prosperity agenda to increase productivity in the industry in Mexico. Sound familiar?

The union had decided not to sign that agreement. It held out for two years.

It said it wanted a 25 per cent increase in wages for Mexican labour before it was going to sign. It relented and the accord is signed. Right now Mexicans earn \$4.50 a day. Next year they will earn \$4.50 a day and the year after they will earn \$4.50 a day. So the question remains: What do you anticipate an average Mexican worker will buy from Canada?

Adjournment Debate

My Mexican interpreter suggested to me many many of these people smoke. If they smoke, it costs them \$3 a day for a package of cigarettes. There is not a lot left over. I hope they are spending it on better things than cigarettes, nevertheless, it points out a real problem.

I was with a business group in Mexico and I guess I was working incognito. I asked the owner of a massive Maquiladora operation: "Do you have any labour problems down here?" He said: "Absolutely not. We know how to handle these people". They certainly do. They know how to handle them because they give them \$4.50 a day and they are going to continue to give them \$4.50 a day.

Some of my worst fears were realized. I have to admit one of the operations I went to was immaculate. The working environment was beautiful. The workers seemed quite content. The discussion between the manager and myself went very well until I asked who owned the company and if it was doing very well in profits. As soon as I said that he said: "It is time to move on".

When I got back I looked into the profile of this industry. This industry made 30 per cent more profit in 1990 than it did in 1989. It is doing exceedingly well. I would say it was making obscene profits. Yet it chooses to pay its workers \$4.50 a day.

I will end by asking the question yet again. What does this government expect the average Mexican worker to buy from Canadian manufacturers on \$4.50 a day?

[Translation]

Mr. André Plourde (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, considering the situation of the Mexican work force, the North American free trade agreement will reinforce economic growth throughout North America, including in Mexico.

The hon. member refers to Mexican wage levels and speaks of \$4 to \$5 per day. Mexican wages are lower than in Canada, although rates of \$2 to \$3 hourly are the norm in the manufacturing sector. Moreover, wage rates tend to be lower in those industries already more fully integrated into the North American economy. Trade brings growth and growth leads to higher wages for workers.