

Inquiries of the Ministry

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State for External Affairs informs me that the matter is being considered for the moment.

I take the liberty of adding that I am strongly under the impression that the allegations made by the member a while ago concerning the behaviour of our embassy officials there are entirely gratuitous.

Mr. Valade: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I must say, to correct the official report, that I have never claimed that the Canadian embassy in Spain had been remiss in its duty. I said that the next of kin of the victims had gone to the Department of External Affairs, here in Canada, and that no one had shown any interest in the matter.

I should like to put the question again to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Does he intend to consider this matter and give the necessary assistance to the relatives of the victims, either through free air transport or some form of financial help, that the remains might be repatriated as soon as possible?

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, may I be privileged to add a word to what the Prime Minister has said. We have been very conscious of this dreadful tragedy in Spain. Our embassy has been doing everything possible to help. I had under consideration whether there might be some way in which help might be given to bring the bodies of the victims home. I do not think it could be in the form of subsidization of air fares, but there are other things we have under consideration.

[Translation]

Mr. Valade: Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question.

As the victims' relatives have asked me what the government could soon do to repatriate the remains, I would ask the hon. minister to specify—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Skeena.

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[English]

MANPOWER**ACTIVITIES OF CONSULTATIVE SERVICES IN ASSISTING LAID-OFF EMPLOYEES**

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. In view of the commitment he made yesterday to communicate to the House the activities of his manpower consultative services in areas where lay-offs have taken place, for example, General Motors in both Ontario and Quebec, is the minister in a position now to give us a full disclosure of what his department has been doing in these areas?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): I will be glad to do so if the House will bear with me. In the case of General Motors at Ste. Thérèse—

[Mr. Valade.]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to the minister that the answer should be as short as possible. I have the impression that he is now launching into a statement which normally should be made on motions, and because of the fact that the question period is limited in time I would hope that answers to questions would be as short as possible.

Mr. Lang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I did suggest yesterday implicitly—

Mr. Broadbent: On a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Broadbent: Given the importance of this issue at this time, I wonder if we could obtain the unanimous agreement of the House to revert to motions?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister has the floor.

Mr. Lang: We have, of course, so many involvements with so many companies, and each lay-off is important. If I were to make a statement on motions each time, the House would be occupied with this at all times.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: That is right.

Mr. Muir: That is what happens under this government.

Mr. Hees: So many plants are closing down because of the maladministration of this government.

Mr. Lang: On the other hand, I would be delighted at any time—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East rising on a point of order?

Mr. Forrestall: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Surely the minister would want to correct the impression he has just left. If he is referring to the 90 per cent unemployed in Guysborough county in Nova Scotia, for example, then I suggest he owes those people an apology.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That of course is not a point of order. Again I caution hon. members that if we embark on points of order and questions of privilege during the 40 minutes there will be those celebrated 20 members left by the wayside at the end of the question period. For the moment the minister still has the floor.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, shortly after the first confidential notification of the lay-off in the case of the plant at Ste. Thérèse it was possible to have discussions with the company and with the union, as well as with the interested department in the province of Quebec, and to arrange for the setting up of an adjustment committee to consider in the usual way the many ways in which manpower services might be available to assist with the problems of the individual workers who were due to be laid off. The timing of the words was chosen in view of the plant's announcement as indicated at that time. All parties have agreed they will co-operate to assist the workers who will be displaced, and of course the usual investigation is taking place about supplementary benefits, and so on.