

Oral Questions

The hon. member said herself that the plant was some 70 years old, I believe. Plants do run out of steam and must be reorganized. They must be remodelled and must be re-energized. That is going on not only in this country. It is going on around the world right now.

Dofasco is going through the same restructuring that other industries are going through to be competitive in the world. That is what is happening.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the only thing that is running out of steam is this government.

I have 1,200 people in my riding who want to work, and they want to work now. The Prime Minister himself did not even understand earlier in Question Period that the unemployment rate in Canada is now over 11 per cent.

I want to ask the Prime Minister who made those promises about the trade agreement how he can justify that in the last six months, 2,200 people in one steel company alone in my community have lost their jobs. Is that what his free trade agreement was supposed to deliver?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, free trade was supposed to deliver more trade between Canada and the United States and thereby new jobs in the new industries.

My hon. friend says it did not. It did. Since 1988, there has been an increase of some 7.6 per cent in trade between Canada and the United States. The amount is—I would want to check the numbers—in excess of \$18 billion. That is in spite of the fact that we have been going through some very serious economic difficulties.

My hon. friend quite properly points to the difficult situation that we face in areas across the country—Hamilton is one—in regard to the steel industry where there has been a loss of jobs because of a rationalization process that has been ongoing for some considerable period of years.

Competitiveness, because of new plants in Brazil, because of new plants coming in Korea and in Taiwan, is causing—

Ms. Copps: We are more competitive than they are.

Mr. Mulroney: In point of fact, their market share internationally has grown very considerably in the steel business where ours has dropped.

That would indicate to international consumers that we are perhaps not as competitive as we once were. The fact of the matter is that with the low interest rates which are at the lowest in some 19 years, with the low inflation rates which are the lowest of the G-7 countries and with an infusion of new investment capital, we should be able to make improvements in some important areas, including Hamilton.

I look forward to working with my hon. friend, the member for Hamilton, to make things better for the people of that area.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister who has spoken forcefully of his commitment to human rights internationally. Canadians learned last week of a massive RCMP witch-hunt in the late 1950s and 1960s targeting gay men in the federal Public Service, a witch-hunt which was directed by the cabinet character deviate committee and led to hundreds of people losing their jobs and thousands of files being opened.

Will the Prime Minister now agree to order an independent public inquiry into these shameful practices which in at least one instance that I know of led to a suicide? Will he tell this House when his government will finally act on its promise to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to ensure that this will never ever happen in Canada again?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, along with my hon. friend and others I read the report of this that took place some 25 or 30 years ago. The passage of time, based on what I have seen, certainly does not make it any less odious. This would appear to be one of the great outrages and violations of fundamental human liberty that one would have seen for an extended period of time.

I do not know much beyond what I have read because of the manner in which documents are kept, but I have instructed the Clerk of the Privy Council to bring forward for consideration ways that we might examine this more carefully because on its face it would appear to be a fundamental violation of the rights of Canadians and, if it is as it has been reported, a most regrettable incident.