

putting before the House will answer their concerns. I am sure that when it is ready to be tabled in the House, the hon. member will be able to determine whether it will allay his worry.

Mr. Kempling: Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us why he instructed the Export Development Corporation not to appear before a committee of the Ontario legislature which is considering economic boycott legislation? Will he now instruct them to go before that committee, or is he afraid to expose the weak and ineffective boycott regulations he has in place right now?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I have repeatedly said that the Export Development Corporation is of tremendous benefit to our trade and our exports. I want to continue trading with Israel and the Middle East countries.

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PUBLIC SERVICE

REDUCTION OF PERSONNEL—EFFECT ON SERVICE TO PUBLIC

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board in his capacity as the minister responsible for public service personnel management. I would like to know if it is possible, over the next three years, to operate the Government of Canada and give the services legislated by this House to the people of Canada, with a total hiring freeze in the public service and a reduction of 60,000 public servants.

An hon. Member: Hypothetical.

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I hear the suggestion that it is hypothetical—

An hon. Member: Highly hypothetical.

Mr. Andras: I think it should be conveyed to the Leader of the Opposition that it is, in fact, hypothetical. I would not consider that to be a very wise measure to take. It is a generalization—

An hon. Member: Too late.

Mr. Andras: We announced recently that we estimate there will be a reduction of some 5,000 authorized positions in the federal public service as a result of the expenditure reductions. That was a result, not an objective, of the exercise. It came about by identifying the programs we were modifying and/or eliminating the positions that accompanied them. Anyone who suggests that kind of global reduction of 60,000—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Andras: —should add to his suggestion how he would accomplish this and what services would be prevented or damaged.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

REDUCTION OF PERSONNEL—REQUEST POLICY BE RECONSIDERED

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. In view of the minister's recent announcement that 5,000 public servants will lose their jobs as a result of government cutbacks, and that most of these lay-offs will occur in the Ottawa area which already has some 30,000 people out of work, will the minister now reconsider this policy and, indeed, abandon it? It is a policy which surpasses the disastrous Inco layoffs of a few months ago.

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has misinterpreted the announcement, perhaps inadvertently. We say that there will be a reduction of 5,000 authorized man-years in authorized positions in the public service as a result of the expenditure changes and modifications. It does not necessarily follow that individuals in those jobs now will be without jobs, because there is an attrition factor in the remainder of the still very sizeable public service, which requires recruitment all the time.

Mr. Symes: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the minister can have it both ways. Either he has to give an unequivocal guarantee that those people will still have jobs, or he has to admit that the lay-offs are real. I would like to direct a supplementary question to the minister, in the absence of the minister of the environment, because it comes under the same cutback policies. In view of the decision of the minister of the environment to close the Petawawa forestry experimental station, with the loss of 68 jobs, including those of some world-renowned scientists, and the plan to transfer government laboratories to the private sector, will the minister urge his colleague to reverse this decision, in light of the fact that Canada's forest industry needs the expertise and the broad range of research carried out by government laboratories, research which is not done by private laboratories with their narrow interests?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the minister of the environment will read *Hansard* tomorrow and note the hon. member's comments.

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FINANCE

EQUALIZATION PAYMENTS—PROVINCIAL AGREEMENT TO CHANGES IN PROGRAM

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance: it concerns the proposed changes to equalization payments which the minister announced on September 8. In that the equalization program is a social contract among 11 governments, it is therefore a fiscal program unlike any other fiscal program that exists in this country in the way it exemplifies the true federal nature of this country.