

Oral Questions

I indicated publicly after the last report that I would designate a senior committee of senior Deputy Ministers, which I did, to prepare amendments to the Official Languages Act in order to ensure that vital piece of legislation was strengthened and enhanced and adapted to new conditions and requirements. That has been done.

The work is now at a senior ministerial level. It will go to Cabinet and will be introduced in the House at the appropriate time, and it will be of benefit to the country.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner said there were some immediate problems to deal with, and I quote again: "Are we to suppose the Government can't walk and chew gum at the same time?" How and when is the Government going to deal with the Commissioner's criticism against CNR, Petro-Canada, Agriculture Canada, CMHC, the Prime Minister's Office, National Defence, Correctional Services of Canada—and I could go on and on? When is the Government going to deal with these criticisms in the report?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, while we will work very, very effectively to protect and promote the interests of minorities, the English-speaking minorities in Quebec and the French-speaking minorities across the country, with enthusiasm and vigour, I can assure the hon. gentleman that I have no apologies to make to anyone about my stand and the stand of this Government in regard to protecting linguistic rights.

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[Translation]

REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

HANNA SHOE COMPANY IN SHAWINIGAN—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion.

Last week I was in Shawinigan, in the constituency of Saint-Maurice, and I met workers from the Hanna Shoe Company which closed down temporarily on February 14.

My question is this: Since the company has already received federal grants, what steps does the Government intend to take now to find a solution and thereby prevent the permanent shutdown of that major industry in the constituency of Saint-Maurice?

[English]

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, the situation to which the Hon. Member refers is only one of such situations we are now living

with in the footwear area. I can only assure the Hon. Member that we have the situation under review and, hopefully, we will be able to come up with a solution to keep the plant open.

[Translation]

REQUEST THAT MINISTER MEET COMPANY MANAGEMENT

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, there are 250 workers in that industry. Does the Minister intend to meet personally with the management of the Hanna shoe company in Shawinigan, in order to find a solution to that most important problem?

[English]

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, if it would be helpful, of course, I have no objection to meeting with those who might want to meet with me, including representatives of the workers, although I want to caution the Hon. Member that some footwear companies are doing comparatively well at the present time, while others are in difficulty. I think our Department can perhaps be most helpful in ensuring that those which are not doing as well as others can at least be made aware of where the opportunities are in the footwear industry in Canada today.

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CANADA POST CORPORATION

CLOSURE OF ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY POST OFFICE

Mr. Joe Reid (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible in this House for Canada Post operations. Canada Post seems to continue to act as though service to the public is a secondary consideration. Is the Minister aware of the closing of the only post office which for 20 years has served the seamen and users of the St. Lawrence Seaway? What can be done to restore that service?

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the closing of that post office. Unfortunately, we had to close it for different reasons, mainly because it was a seasonal office and had a very limited clientele. To achieve important savings we had to close that post office. However, I can assure my colleague that we are looking for a convenient alternative to accommodate the sailors.

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ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

TWO FRANCOPHONES' REQUEST FOR COURT TRIAL IN FRENCH IN NEWFOUNDLAND

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, the Government likes to claim credit for firsts, and in that