

Oral Questions

out to the right hon. member that it is not at all unusual for a minister, who has made representation to the Minister of Finance as to what he hopes to have included in the budget, to make preparations to advertise, in the hope and confidence that the minister will follow his recommendation, but, nevertheless, he is in the position of not knowing, until the budget is introduced or until he is briefed in the hour before the budget is introduced, whether it will or will not be budget material.

Because the minister in question did not have the sealed envelopes delivered until after the budget was introduced in the House, this showed, indeed, that he was not sure whether the information would actually be contained in the budget. It certainly confirms and strengthens the position the minister has put forward.

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[Translation]

REFORM OF PENSION LEGISLATION—INQUIRY RESPECTING
MINISTER'S PLANS

Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

In view of the statement in the budget that government tax revenues will not be sufficient to provide for any new social measures, and that substantial cuts are expected because of inflation, what are the minister's plans with respect to pension review?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, first of all I would like to point out, if I may, that the preamble to this question cannot be assigned the slightest credibility. I do not know, and the hon. member has not told me, where he got his information.

Obviously, at this point we cannot launch new programs for social spending. However, we have managed to hold on to indexing of all Canada's social programs.

That being said, I am grateful to the hon. member for giving me an opportunity, and I shall make use of it immediately, to point out that the study on pensions in the private sector in Canada will probably be the most important document on social reform to appear in the eighties.

I have not yet heard the official position of the New Democratic Party on the subject, and we are still waiting to hear the views of the Progressive Conservative Party. On this side, we shall be publishing a green paper, very shortly, which will show Canadians what kind of changes we would like to see and for which we would like their commitment, to help us take measures that will benefit all Canadians.

INCOME TAX CREDITS—MEASURES TO MAKE TAX SYSTEM
MORE JUST—MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood): Madam Speaker, the minister is actually talking about the whole pension system, since instead of addressing the review of the public sector's system and the Canada Pension Plan, she is referring to a review of the situation in the private sector and corporate pensions, which is indeed a dramatic shift in Liberal policy.

The minister is witnessing substantial cuts in social spending and is aware that the Canadian Council on Social Development has criticized this reactionary measure in the budget. In view of the minister's statements in favour of tax credits to make our tax system more equitable, and considering the fact that the system now being proposed by the Minister of Finance gives more benefits to the rich and less to the poor, how can the minister remain a member of a government that has rejected all her social and fiscal proposals?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): For a very simple reason, Madam Speaker. I have less trouble understanding what I read than the hon. member does. It seems to me he has missed the point entirely, and in any case, I do not think he knows what he is talking about. Regarding his first question on pension, the expression "pension review", has been used for a year and a half because on this side of the House, a study on corporate pension review was started a year and a half ago. When he refers to the review of pensions in the public sector, he should know, and there have been references in *Hansard* for months, that this government, as soon as the economic situation permits, intends to give first priority to completing the work started and consolidated in July 1980; that is, to bring single persons above the poverty line by supplementing the \$420 given in July 1980. I think this is quite clear, and I do not see what his problem is.

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[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

RECOGNITION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, I have a straightforward question that is directed to the Prime Minister, regarding the constitutional proposals. Will the Prime Minister confirm that all of the provinces, except Saskatchewan, have now agreed to the inclusion intact of the equality clause, Section 28, as it was introduced to the House of Commons earlier this year with unanimous approval by all parties of this House?

● (1500)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the negotiations on this particular subject have been going on for several days because it was a matter of clarifying what the premiers intended when they signed the accord. There has been, effectively, disagreement between them as to