

cannot give an undertaking at this point, simultaneous or unphased.

Mr. Rae: Well, the minister is lugubrious if he is not solemn, Madam Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rae: I should like to ask the minister a supplementary question. Elsewhere in the same speech he said, with modesty worthy of his predecessor, the hon. member for St. John's West:

—let me assure you that it was to create jobs, improve living standards and promote greater equity that I took on the position of Minister of Finance.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rae: What did he plan to do on the fourth day?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rae: I see him laughing now. I would like to ask the minister how that commitment, which appeared to be pretty solemn in the context of the speech, gibes with the fact that we have had since this government took power 1,000 lay-offs per working day, according to the government's own composite industrial wage, workers across Canada have fallen behind in the cost of living, and therefore their living standard has declined. Finally, so far as equity is concerned, nowhere in all of Canada have wages fallen further behind the cost of living than in Atlantic Canada. I would like to know how the record of this government compares with the rather high and solemn standard which the minister has set for himself.

Mr. MacEachen: I guess the hon. member has proven the danger of making speeches and the even greater danger of circulating, so the hon. member will have an opportunity to quote from them. In any event I do not find any contradiction between the declaration of objectives and the current situation. I believe that as time goes on the hon. member will, I hope, be convinced that the government is making a very serious effort to live up to the objectives which were laid out in that speech.

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HEALTH CARE

INQUIRY WHY PRIORITY GIVEN TO ADVERTISING PROGRAM OVER REDUCTION IN INFANT MORTALITY RATES

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): I have a question for the Minister of Justice in his capacity as Minister of State for Social Development. The minister, of course, is aware that his government has often stated its concern for the native people, and indeed he has himself on many occasions. He must be aware that for less than \$4 million the federal government could establish a program to reduce infant mortality rates. This program would reduce native infant mortality rates by almost half, which would mean a reduction from 28 to 15

deaths per 1,000 and in the national rate from 16 to 10 per 1,000 live births.

I ask the Minister of Justice in his capacity as Minister of State for Social Development to explain to the House, and indeed to all Canadians, how he can permit this government to give priority to the Liberal advertising program over a reduction of infant deaths in this country.

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, since I am responsible for population data, which form the base, and for social policies, and since my colleague the Minister of State for Social Development is responsible for broad directions, may I ask the hon. member whether he would be so kind as to repeat his question?

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, I put the question to the Minister of Justice who has been minister of Indian affairs in a previous administration and who is now responsible on behalf of his government for social development in this country. If he is not interested enough to answer the question I put to him—he is the one from whom I wanted an answer—then I will forgo putting it to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

● (1500)

Mr. Nielsen: My supplementary question is again directed to the Minister of Justice in his capacity as minister responsible for both constitutional and social development in the country. Would he please explain why a non-essential constitutional advertising campaign was initiated, rather than an immunization program for small children which would have enhanced the co-operative spirit in this country? Obviously the minister puts a higher priority on showing Canada geese on television rather than on the health of our young children.

Miss Bégin: Madam Speaker, I would like to answer two parts of the question which are clearly within the Department of National Health and Welfare. I do not know why the member tries to ask a minister who does not have that information.

Mr. Epp: He is responsible.

Miss Bégin: I would like to tell him—

An hon. Member: He does not want the answer.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I think even at this stage, although the question period is practically ending, we do need some silence, and I would thank members for that.

Miss Bégin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The member is trying to link alleged cuts in very key programs to other