

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Minister of Finance.

Last week the government was talking about a non-budget and a leadership convention. This week we heard that there may be a budget and a non-convention.

Will the Minister of Finance introduce soon a budget that will meet the economic needs of Canadians, or is he waiting to have a budget that will meet the needs of the Tory party?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition will get both and he should be worried about both of them as well.

As the Prime Minister indicated last Friday, I was involved in my pre-budget consultation process. That process is well advanced. I have now had a chance to discuss the budget with my cabinet colleagues and I can advise my hon. friend that I will be bringing down a budget shortly after the House returns from the Easter break.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we are glad to hear that, because the country needs a budget right now. And incidentally, there are a number of developments that will interest the Minister of Finance.

Of course we are very disappointed that the Minister decided not to run for the leadership of his party. He has always been well-liked, but unfortunately, his neighbour to the left decided otherwise. It is really too bad.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance whether he intends to take the advice of the hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore who said this morning that it was very important that the Canadian government not proceed with the helicopter program.

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the hon. member is referring to, whether he is referring to the fact that social payments should be cut or payments to provinces. Which part of that statement was he referring to? He may want to clarify that.

The fact of the matter is we will be building on the policies that are starting to demonstrate very clearly they are serving Canadians very well.

Mr. Riis: No, no.

Mr. Mazankowski: If I may, Mr. Speaker, last week Statistics Canada released a review of the leading economic indicators. This is what it said: The unemployment rate, down; help wanted index, up; department store sales, up; Bank of Canada and prime rate, down; housing prices, down; aggregate wages and salaries, up; planned construction activity, up; industrial capacity utilization rate, up.

• (1420)

Those are the kinds of policies we will follow.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, there is one thing the Canadian people know is going down. It is the government and the Conservative Party. There is no doubt about it.

I just want to know from the Minister of Finance if he has any intention of looking at other propositions that have been accepted by Canadians all across the nation today. One good way to put some of the unemployed back to work is to have in the next budget a program for infrastructure: one-third, one-third and one-third. In travelling across Canada the mayors are asking for that all the time.

When will this minister start listening to the Canadian people by reflecting the needs of the Canadian people right away and putting them back to work as they want?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to build upon the December economic statement and the budget I brought down last February, both of which are serving Canadians very well.