

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

UNEMPLOYMENT—REQUEST FOR NEW MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. Earlier this week, the communique of the London economic summit conference which was signed by the Prime Minister of Canada and six other heads of government, affirmed, and I quote, that "our most urgent task is to create more jobs" and went on to say "we are particularly concerned about unemployment among young people". I should like to ask the Acting Prime Minister whether in the light of that declaration the government of Canada which is now talking about this problem, is prepared to bring in new and effective job creation measures to assist the more than one million Canadians presently out of work.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): The action taken by the government in anticipation of the current high unemployment rates was reflected in the budgetary proposals as well as in the special Canada Works and Young Canada Works programs. These actions were taken in the light of our expectation that we would be facing high levels of unemployment at this time. It is not proposed at this time to bring in further measures because we believe that over the next period of time the budgetary proposals will have an effect and we can look forward to increased employment.

Mr. Clark: I ask myself if the Acting Prime Minister will be able to get away with that kind of cold comfort when he goes home to the unemployed of Cape Breton.

An hon. Member: Perhaps he won't go home.

Mr. Clark: Yes, perhaps he will not go home. Given the fact that Canada's unemployment level is currently the highest of the seven nations that signed the summit conference communique and that the unemployment level in this country is among the highest of the 24 OECD nations, and in light of the signal failure of this country to create jobs and of the fact that the government stands out in the industrialized world for its failure to create jobs for its citizens, I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister whether the government of Canada is not now prepared to consider a significant change in its existing spending priorities to help reduce our shocking national level of unemployment, and whether the government will not consider a further selective reduction in federal taxes to stimulate demand and to get Canadians working again?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has referred to Canada's standing among the industrialized countries of the world. He will have noticed that the report prepared for the summit conference indicates that Canada's

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economic performance over the past number of years was the best among the seven industrialized countries meeting in London. I repeat the answer I gave earlier that it is not the intention of the government to introduce new measures at this time because we must give an opportunity for the economic stimulus package presented in the budget to work itself through the economy.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT—POSSIBILITY OF SEEKING CO-OPERATION OF LABOUR AND MANAGEMENT TO CREATE JOBS

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister, first of all, if he would like to send that report to the more than a million Canadians who are out of work so that they can take the kind of encouragement from it that he has found. I would like to direct his attention to the time bomb that has been built into Canada by the fact that so many of the unemployed in this country now are under the age of 24 and are starting to look for work when there are no jobs available to them. Given the fact that that kind of unemployment among young people can cause serious continuing social unrest and alienation, particularly in the five eastern provinces, I would ask the Acting Prime Minister whether in the discussions that are now underway with business and labour on behalf of the government of Canada there has been any attempt by the government to get those two other partners in the economy to create jobs for young people since the government of Canada will not?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition obviously refers to a serious problem in the Canadian economy, but he should bear in mind the number of positive aspects, namely, the total employment in Canada has increased by about 110,000 in the last several months, the export picture is quite strong, the expectations of manufacturing intentions are quite positive, and the upturn in the United States is bound to have an effect on the Canadian economy—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Don't hold your breath.

Mr. MacEachen: —in addition to the economic stimulus package contained in the budget of the Minister of Finance. There is no disposition of this side of the House to underestimate the gravity of the present situation, but I believe it should be placed in the proper context.

Mr. Clark: I presume that when the Acting Prime Minister talks about the improvement in the export situation he is talking about the export of young Canadians whom the Prime Minister counsels to leave this country if they cannot find work here.