

*Oral Questions*

Now is the time to withdraw Bill 178. You advance neither society nor its majority by diminishing the rights of the minority, whether this means protecting the right to speak English in Quebec or fighting the perception around the world that we are a racist or bigoted society.

[Translation]

Wipe Bill 178 off the map of Quebec. Long live free speech.

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[English]

**BATTLE OF HONG KONG**

**Mr. Bill Kempling (Burlington):** Madam Speaker, 50 years ago, December 8, 1941, two battalions of Canadian soldiers began the fight for their lives as Japanese forces swept into Hong Kong.

Men of the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers never had a realistic hope of repulsing such an invitation. They had no air support. They were out-gunned. Much of their transport had yet to arrive. They had no escape route and they were in fact doomed from day one.

Yet these men, trained only for garrison duty, managed to hold until Christmas Day. Some 290 Canadians were killed trying to achieve the impossible.

For the survivors, the ordeal had barely begun. For the remainder of the war they had to combat brutality, forced labour, starvation rations and illness.

The wonder is that so many managed to stick it out and live to rejoice in VJ Day and liberation. Their strength of character and will to live were unconquerable.

Statistics tell us that 1,975 Canadians sailed from Vancouver for Hong Kong in October 1941 and more than 550 never returned.

On this 50th anniversary of the Battle of Hong Kong let us salute those Canadian troops who were the first group to see action and the last to see freedom. They have earned our everlasting respect.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[English]

**UNEMPLOYMENT**

**Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister. The Prime Minister will know that 1,424,000 Canadians, including 600,000 Canadian women are without work as we approach the end of 1991. These Canadians, we can only conclude, in the mind of this government are an acceptable human loss in the so-called war against inflation.

• (1120)

I want to ask the acting Prime Minister: What hope, what promise of better performance is this government going to offer the 1.4 million Canadians who will spend Christmas this year as unemployment statistics, as stark evidence of this government's economic failure?

**Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)):** Madam Speaker, no one takes delight in the unemployment figures that came out today. However, we might point out that employment has increased in the last six of nine months. The decline that we had in employment in the month of November was primarily in part time. In October and November we have had some 98,000 new full-time jobs created.

The economy is coming out of a very, very difficult period of time. It is coming out slowly but it is coming out. The signals are very, very positive. I can tell the hon. member that we are expecting a good recovery in 1992. With the participation in the labour force, we expect the conditions to be much better in the very near future.

**Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte):** Madam Speaker, that is an incredible answer from the minister who apparently knows what is going on in the Canadian economy. The minister talked about labour force participation. The minister has not told Canadians or members of this House that 45,000 Canadians left the labour force last month, that if those 45,000 Canadians had not given up looking for work or gone on welfare,