

Oral Questions

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I said to the hon. gentleman last week when he first put these questions to me that we are awaiting with great interest the study of the Economic Council of Canada analysing the state of the labour market as reflected in the statistics.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE INCREASE IN LIGHT OF INCREASE
IN JOB OPPORTUNITIES—REQUEST FOR EXPLANATION

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, on the point mentioned by the Minister of Finance that there has been a 21 per cent increase in the Canadian help wanted index I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration who is now back in the House after four days' absence.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lundrigan: Would he like to indicate what explanation his department has for the fact that there is an increase of 21 per cent in the index of people seeking jobs, based on advertisements in newspapers, and there is still not only a high unemployment rate but there has been a very substantial increase in the unemployment rate in the last two or three months?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, we are always eager to improve the information base on which we provide matching of jobs seekers to existing vacancies. I cannot give any single, simplistic answer as to why that increase has taken place in the unemployment rate, but we are doing our best to improve our manpower office services to match jobs seekers to vacancies.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, assuming the minister is investigating the productivity of his Canada Manpower offices may I ask him this question. In view of his statement that employment is high where it counts and unemployment is high only where it apparently does not count, in certain regions and among young people, would he indicate what he meant by that statement and, more important, would he modify it and offer some constructive programs to the country to help the regionally depressed areas and particularly young people among whom unemployment is around 12 per cent?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, the premise on which the hon. member bases his question is quite incorrect. That was not the statement I made. What I said was that while unemployment is unhappily high it does not represent one big monolithic unemployment problem, that we do have intolerably high unemployment among young people and serious regional unemployment, which I think is almost the opposite of the interpretation the hon. member put on my speech.

While I was away from the House during the four days to which the hon. member referred I was consulting with the western provincial governments and other people there, and we explored many of these aspects. As I did then I indicate now that we are looking very carefully at improving manpower services, with particular reference to job information centres and job banks.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker—

[Mr. Stanfield.]

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. member rising on a point of order?

Mr. Lundrigan: I want to ask the minister another question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member and others, including the hon. member for Don Valley, apparently wish to ask supplementaries. My suggestion is that the Chair be allowed to attempt to complete the first round of questioning and then return to the hon. member and to others who may have supplementaries on this important matter.

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ENERGY

OIL—POSSIBILITY OF DIRECT SALE BY VENEZUELA TO
CANADIAN GOVERNMENT

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources but in his absence will direct it to the Prime Minister. During the energy minister's recent discussions with the Venezuelan government regarding oil supplies to Canada, did the Venezuelan government indicate that it was prepared to sell oil directly to the Canadian government?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will be in the House tomorrow and will be able to answer the hon. member.

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INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I wish to address a question to the hon. Minister of Finance.

Can he say whether a serious study on the profitability of Canadian federalism has been made by the federal and the Quebec governments?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, for the Department of Finance, Confederation is always profitable.

Mr. Beaudoin: Can the hon. minister say whether the federal government is aware of the fact that official figures provided by his department have been used during the Quebec election campaign?

Mr. Speaker: Order. In my opinion, the question as formulated is not in order.

[English]

The hon. member for Don Valley on a supplementary to the first question. In any event, I recognize the hon. member at this time. The hon. member for Don Valley.