

*Oral Questions*

to what I think the Minister is attempting to apologize for, are we now to believe that the Minister is releasing information with respect to a conversation that took place between a Member of this House, a citizen of this country, regarding tax problems, or the lack of tax problems, that took place between that citizen and an official of his Department, and that in the course of this so-called apology respecting the release of a letter that should not have been released, the Minister is now talking about a conversation between officials of his Department and that individual? Is my assumption correct? If so, that is a far worse breach of etiquette.

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, obviously I have been referring to a representation made to my Department in the course of pre-budget consultations. We have hundreds of such representations. These representations sometimes are indicated or presented as private and confidential. They may imply company or corporate information, for instance, that would hurt a particular company if it were of a competitive nature, and all that. But very often those representations are of a general nature. I have always taken the point of view that those representations of a general nature were not subject to the provisions of privacy but they could be referred to, and this is what I did in the House the other day. I have nothing to add to that, Mr. Speaker.

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**THE ECONOMY**

PLIGHT OF UNEMPLOYED FACING EXHAUSTION OF  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

**Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the Minister of Finance. It relates to the question of employment and the unfairness of the recovery that is supposedly taking place. Does the Minister agree that any citizen of Canada who has received this many negative replies to job applications, and who is about to run out of employment insurance benefits, is entitled to expect the Government to understand his plight? Does he not agree that it would be a tragedy if this man, or any other person in a similar circumstance, were to lose everything for which they have worked simply because they have no job, no prospect of a job, no unemployment insurance, and insufficient income to maintain their families and their homes?

● (1450)

**Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member has returned to a theme which he developed in questions last week in the House. I am sure all of us in the House—and certainly all of us on this side—would agree that that situation is a traumatic and difficult one, one which elicits tremendous sympathy and concern on the part of Members of Parliament.

**An Hon. Member:** Well, do something about it.

**Mr. Roberts:** One of the hon. gentleman's colleagues says, "Well, do something about it." What the hon. gentleman has suggested so far to do about it is to change the limitations under the Unemployment Insurance Commission to extend the benefits so far as necessary and, in effect, *ad infinitum*. That is one possible approach to the whole question of how unemployment insurance should be applied. However, it is not the approach which is represented in the Act. The Act emphasizes the insurance principle in attaching benefits over a limited period of time for specific purposes.

If we were to follow the course of action suggested by the Hon. Member, it would require not only amendments to the legislation, but it would also require, I suggest to him, an increase in fees both to employers and employees who are contributing to the fund. I wonder very much whether he has the support of his labour colleagues and union friends in suggesting that those kinds of increases should take place.

**Mr. Deans:** The Minister put his finger on the problem. The problem, of course, is paying for it. There are numerous ways with a reallocation of resources that the Government could redirect funds presently going into other less worthy projects, to people in need.

**Mr. Blaikie:** Like the nuclear industry.

GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH TO CREATION OF JOBS

**Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense to be apologetic. Surely it makes no sense to feel sadness about it. The only thing that will matter is when the Government brings forward a program which will extend benefits in order that this man, and the tens of thousands like him, will not be forced to lose everything for which they have worked during the balance of the economic downturn.

Will the Government pay heed to this request and bring forward programs which will guarantee that people who have worked all their lives will be able to maintain themselves and their families until such time as the economic recovery we are told is in place begins to have some beneficial effect upon them?

**Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, we have shown that the economic development which is in place is having a beneficial effect on jobs.

**Mr. Deans:** Not on these people.

**Mr. Roberts:** It has created something like 400,000 jobs over the past year. The hon. gentleman—and I understand it is the approach of his policy—does not believe in the approach we are taking to job creation. Our approach to job creation is one which relies upon economic recovery and activities by the Government to provide a context within which the private sector will act as a motor force in the creation of jobs, and in that we have been successful. It also involves a more focused approach through employment and insurance programs to areas of special difficulty in the economy. A primary objective