

Oral Questions

NEW ENTRANTS TO LABOUR FORCE

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, why does the Minister persist in trying to get away with these canards? Does he not realize that from August, 1983, to February, 1984, the number of new entrants joining the labour force in the U.S. was 576,000, compared to 61,000 in Canada? The U.S. unemployment rate before the recession was the same as ours, 7.5 per cent, but it is now 3.5 per cent better. When is the Minister going to admit that they are doing much better in the U.S., and when will he emulate them, follow some of their policies, and do something for the unemployed of Canada, instead of giving specious reasoning and misrepresentations to the House?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the rhetoric of the Hon. Member will not change any of the facts. Of course there are more new entrants into the job market in the U.S. than in Canada; they have ten times the population. I have indicated that you have to look at the percentages. The fact is that the percentage increase in the number of people joining the labour force in Canada in 1983, compared to the U.S., was 40 per cent higher. I invite my friend to check the facts and figures. Then he can abandon the rhetoric he indulges in. However, I do not think that will lead him to that at all. He is more interested in rhetoric than in facts.

● (1420)

Mr. Crosbie: There are 1,476,000 Canadians officially unemployed. They are not interested in the Minister's rhetoric or in his attempting to explain away the unexplainable. They want jobs, and the Minister is doing nothing to assist them.

REQUEST FOR ACTION TO REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, in 1968 when the present Prime Minister came into office there were 360,000 unemployed, and today there are four times that many. That is not rhetoric; that is fact. When are the Minister and the Prime Minister going to take some interest in our economy and develop some new policies or new approaches which will reduce the figure of 1,476,000 unemployed? That is not rhetoric. That is 1,476,000 unemployed people you are doing nothing about.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I intend to address the very question raised by the Hon. Member in a speech I am going to make next Wednesday. I invite him to read that speech. He will discover the facts of what has happened to the economy since 1968. He will discover, among other things, that we have created something like three million jobs since 1968. These are jobs that have been created in Canada that did not exist in 1968. These jobs have been created in the Canadian economy. We have known higher rates of growth during that period than most other industrialized countries. If my friend takes the trouble of reading the speech, he will find that the economic record of our country

since 1968 is indeed one of the best of all industrialized countries.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES IN CANADA AND UNITED STATES

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. He has claimed that we are using rhetoric to alter the facts. He is using rhetoric to misrepresent the facts. He persists in saying that the number of people entering the labour force in Canada is greater than the number in the U.S. The facts show that for the last six months the percentage increase is exactly the same for both countries. The figure is .5 per cent.

Why does the Minister blatantly misrepresent the facts when trying to explain why unemployment in the U.S. has dropped substantially, about 18 per cent in the last six months, compared to a marginal drop in unemployment in Canada of about 2.6 per cent?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I may remind my hon. friend that the growth rate of the Canadian economy in 1983 compared very favourably with that of the U.S. economy. During the first two or even three months of this year, it seems the U.S. economy experienced a very high growth rate, as much as 7.2 per cent real growth. I am not in a position to know exactly what the growth rate was in Canada, but eventually StatsCan will publish these figures, and we will then be able to compare. Once more, however, what I said about the increase in labour force in 1983 reflects the true situation. In 1983, in Canada, there was a proportional increase in the labour force that was 40 per cent higher than in the United States.

My hon. friend chose to take the figures for the last six months. I referred to the figures for 1983, and perhaps she would care to check those figures.

[*English*]

Miss Carney: Mr. Speaker, I think the record should show that the Minister of Finance did not answer the question.

AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with a second error and omission in the Minister's recent remarks. Last week he said that he agreed with the statement by the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Gerald Bouey, that Canadians are partly to blame for high interest rates because Canadian wage settlements are higher than those in the U.S. In the first nine months of the fiscal year, which is how Statistics Canada measures it, StatsCan reported that the average weekly wage in Canada, excluding agriculture, rose 3.2 per cent. That is well below the 5.1 per cent recorded in the U.S. in the same period. Since the facts contradict the Minister's own statement, why is he unfairly blaming Canadians for his own high interest rate policies?