

Oral Questions

Mr. Kelleher: I will read just one sentence. "The Prime Minister and all of the provincial Premiers met recently in Halifax and agreed to work very closely together on all aspects of the negotiations".

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PARTICIPATION OF PROVINCES

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex-Windsor): Mr. Speaker, it is precisely at that point that the Minister went on to say that that represents the primacy of the federal Government. In addition to that contradiction, why has the Minister contradicted the Secretary of State for External Affairs who told me on December 2 that this principle of full provincial participation would be worked out over the next 90 days? Why did the Minister unilaterally decide to set out its terms in New York just 15 days later?

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, in case no one has noticed, the Secretary of State for External Affairs and I do not have any disagreement. We agree with one another completely on all matters of Government policy. I agree that we will work out this deal with the provinces during the next 90 days. As I have pointed out, we commenced that process yesterday.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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FOOD AND DRUGS

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES—LEVEL OF ETHYL CARBAMATES

Mr. Joe Reid (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. The Minister recently released a press statement having to do with ethyl carbamates in alcoholic beverages. What consultations did the Minister have with respect to the wine-making industry and with the Province of Ontario before he established the levels which were set out in his statement? Will these guidelines apply to the sale of all wines in Canada?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure Hon. Members know, the Hon. Member for St. Catharines has been a strong representative of the interests in his riding.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Epp (Provencher): I commend him for it.

I wish to tell him that the federal Government has guidelines. That is our responsibility. It is not a matter of consensus. We have presented that before the judicial inquiry in the Province of Ontario. Additionally, there were meetings yesterday between my own officials and the LCBO. I believe this afternoon the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs will be making a statement at Queens Park with respect to the

same issue in order to present it from a federal point of view. I think we are okay.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

EFFECT OF CHANGES COVERING EARLY RETIREMENT PENSIONS

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. On January 1 the Minister will implement changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act which will count early retirement pensions as income, thereby robbing thousands of Canadians of their paid-up unemployment insurance even though these Canadians are ready and willing to work. Considering that many groups and individuals have continually protested these changes, will the Minister withdraw these measures scheduled for January 1 now and refer them to the Forget Commission, which she has appointed to study the Unemployment Insurance Program?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member will remember, this change was first announced on November 4, 1984. However, in order that it be implemented fairly across the country, we have delayed the implementation until January 1, 1986, to ensure that people have adequate lead time to deal with this matter.

As far as the Forget Commission is concerned, I have asked it to review all aspects of the Unemployment Insurance Program. If the Commission wishes to deal with this matter as well, then it will certainly be entitled to do so.

INCREASE IN NUMBERS OF OLDER UNEMPLOYED

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have continued to protest against these changes since last year. Does the Minister not realize that in the last two years the rate of unemployed older Canadians between the ages of 45 years and 64 years has gone from 7.5 per cent to 9.4 per cent and that another 77,000 older workers have been classified as unofficially unemployed? If she will not listen to me, will she at least listen to these older Canadians who need their pensions and unemployment insurance benefits to survive until they get new jobs?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I have heard from many Canadians, including many Members of the House of Commons, about the inequities which exist in the Unemployment Insurance Program. We have moved to try to redress some of those inequities. We hope that the results of the Forget Commission and its recommendations to Government will further that cause and, in fact, reduce and eliminate some of the inequities which continue to exist.

Mr. Allmand: That does not make sense at all.