

Oral Questions

punished in our criminal justice system thereby leaving the victims without protection of the law.

Can the Minister of Justice indicate whether he will be addressing this matter in a way that will assure victims of crime involving drunkenness that they will have the full support of our criminal justice system?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my view the present state of the law in respect of self-induced intoxication is unsatisfactory. The government has already published a blueprint for change which initiated a consultation process some two weeks ago.

I share the sense of urgency expressed by my hon. colleague and other members of the House. We are doing everything possible to accelerate the preparation of a new provision in the Criminal Code in this regard. Indeed we will make every effort to prepare an amendment for introduction in the House shortly after we resume in session following the Christmas break.

[Translation]

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as a follow-up to the same question on the same subject put to the Minister of Justice, how can the minister use the pretext of having to consult Canadians, when what is obviously expected of him is to act now? What is he waiting for, what is keeping him from taking action?

[English]

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is needed in order to act responsibly is to take into account the views Canadians want to express on how this law should work. For example I have already been put on notice by women's groups that they disagree with the proposals contained in the discussion paper. They want to speak with me directly about alternatives.

We must confront questions about how to design this law so that it withstands an attack under the charter. We do not want an amendment that is struck down six months from now leaving us back where we began. We will take the time necessary to get it right.

• (1455)

[Translation]

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think that what we have is not a Minister of Justice but a minister of consultation.

Why does the minister not table a bill immediately instead of consulting right and left? We want a bill now!

[English]

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already told the House, we shall make every effort to have an amendment to the code prepared for introduction shortly after the House resumes following the Christmas break. That time will be necessary to take into account the considerations that arise.

May I add that those cases which may come before the courts in the meantime will do so with the admonition of the Supreme Court of Canada itself that this defence is available in the rarest of cases. The onus is on the accused to demonstrate that the principle applies.

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INTEREST RATES

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian real interest rates are the highest in the industrial world and there are now predictions for another large increase. While I do not agree, analysts suggest that the solution to Canada's financial problems lies in a reduction rather than an increase in these interest rates.

Why does the Minister of Finance not order the Bank of Canada to lower interest rates?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in an exchange that did grievous harm to my career and the hon. member's career he gave me a 90 when I made my presentation to the House of Commons finance committee. It is with enormous regret knowing his great reputation that given that question I must give him a failing grade.

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the public record shows clearly that I do not believe that the Bank of Canada can or should lower interest rates.

The public record also shows that when the Minister of Finance was in opposition he argued vociferously that Governor John Crow should be ordered to lower interest rates. What has the minister learned since those days in opposition?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the position that I argued in opposition was that the government of the day should not place all the burden on the Bank of Canada but that it should take fiscal action itself to get the economy going and that it should put Canadians back to work. That is exactly what we are doing in government.

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TAXATION

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.