

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Such a motion can be presented to the House only with its unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: No.

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GRAIN

REQUEST FOR BREAKDOWN OF MONEYS RETAINED BY WHEAT BOARD FOLLOWING FINAL PAYMENT TO FARMERS—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I rise to move a motion under the provisions of Standing Order 43, one of urgent and pressing necessity. In view of the fact that the final payment to grain farmers in the Canadian Wheat Board region was shockingly low for 1975-76 crop year, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Pembina (Mr. Elzinga):

That the Minister in charge of the Wheat Board commence forthwith to indicate to the individual prairie farmers what moneys were held back by the Canadian Wheat Board and give a breakdown on the various allocations of retained money.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Such a motion can be presented to the House only with its unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Oral Questions.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

UNEMPLOYMENT—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister which deals with the very unhealthy state of the economy, particularly as it affects unemployment. The Conference Board of Canada predicted this month that Canada is about to face its worst unemployment rate since the second world war and forecast in excess of 8 per cent unemployment by year's end. Does the Prime Minister agree with this forecast and if not, does he envisage a decline by the year's end of the 7.5 per cent December rate of unemployment which left some 778,000 Canadians out of work, which numbers are growing every day? Has the Prime Minister an answer to that question?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): He has no answer.

Mr. Bob Kaplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, hon. members are aware that a number of measures have been taken already, for example the

Oral Questions

lowering of the bank interest rate, which we expect will have positive effects on the economy. Work is presently under way within the department on the preparation of a budget. It will be considered and brought forward some time before the summer.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, you know what we think about parliamentary secretaries answering questions—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander:—especially when they are directed to the Prime Minister. To paraphrase the right hon. member for Prince Albert, when we are after elephants we are not looking for answers from rabbits.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: I hope the Prime Minister can answer this question and give the House the opportunity to hear what he has to say with respect to the concern of many Canadians about what the government thinks regarding this very unhealthy state of the economy. Will the Prime Minister undertake to make a statement in this House as soon as possible, preferably within a week, regarding the state of the economy, tabling at the same time the government's economic forecasts and analyses for the year 1977 affecting unemployment, job creation, real growth and inflation? Is the government going to maintain its usual silence and secrecy in the face of grim forecasts reported by the OECD, the University of Toronto Institute for Policy Analysis and the Conference Board of Canada? Will the Prime Minister undertake to make a statement with respect to the state of the economy, dealing with those matters which I just mentioned?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this kind of statement in the normal course would be made by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I am amazed that the Prime Minister does not think these matters of great concern and that he will not reveal to the Canadian people the state of the economy, particularly in view of the forecasts of several private organizations. May I ask the Prime Minister this question: Given that economic indicators show that our economic situation is worsening rapidly, will the Prime Minister assure the House that he is considering the introduction of an early budget to deal with this unemployment situation, which can only be described as chaotic, frightening and unacceptable?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's remarks seem more in the nature of an argument than a question. Without agreeing to the zoological preamble to his previous question, I would repeat my answer, that the Minister of Finance will of course be introducing a budget in the course of this session.

Mr. Stevens: When?