

Oral Questions

He was a very great Canadian, and it has been one of the greatest joys for me, being Minister of Justice at this time in our history, that my former colleague was at the same time the Chief Justice of Canada. He was a great scholar, a great person, a very human man. I want to extend my sincere sympathy, and I am sure that of all my colleagues in the House, to his wife and his family.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: May I suggest that we rise and observe a minute's silence in memory of the Late Chief Justice, Bora Laskin.

[Whereupon the House stood in silence for one minute.]

• (1420)

Mr. Speaker: Order please. Would there be unanimous agreement that the period of questions extend until five minutes past three?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE ECONOMY

REQUEST FOR ADJUSTMENTS TO ECONOMIC POLICY

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. I would like to refer him to yesterday's *Hansard* where, as reported at page 2422, he said:

If need be, we will make the necessary adjustments.

He was referring to the economic situation. He went on to say:

In the meantime I see no reason to change the basic policy that we have been following.

If that statement means anything, Mr. Speaker, it means that the Government is not powerless to affect our economic situation, as it has been claiming now for some months, and that it could make adjustments.

Unemployment is up for the fourth month in a row. There has been an increase in the average time that the unemployed are unemployed in excess of 14 weeks. The number of people working full-time is 352,000 below the pre-recession peak, and 68,000 below the number when the Liberals returned to govern in 1980. The number of young people without jobs is 346,000 below that peak, and there are 288,000 more youth unemployed than when the Government came to power.

In view of those facts, why not make the adjustments now? If you can make adjustments to the economy as you implied yesterday, why not do it now? Why wait? Why are you still requiring the unemployed to suffer, if you can take action that might prevent that?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is not the Government that has claimed nothing could be done about the economy. These are statements the Member made when he was Minister of Finance. I have already quoted some of those statements of his which are in *Hansard*.

Second, I would like to invite the Hon. Member to address the Chair when asking questions, and respect the rules of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stevens: Poor baby.

An Hon. Member: Come on.

Mr. Lalonde: Third, I want to tell my friend that the forecast I made at the time of the Budget—

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Tell the Speaker.

Mr. Lalonde:—of growth this year of 4.9 per cent is still valid. When I prepared the Budget of February 15 I bore in mind the figures that the Hon. Member mentioned. The Budget of April 15, 1983, and the Budget of February 15, 1984, were aimed at addressing the economic problems of the country. I am confident that the measures I announced in the Budget of February are those which are required and are adequate for the time being.

As I have indicated, however, we are monitoring the situation and, as Minister of Finance, I am concerned with trying to make sure that every step is taken to ensure that the Canadian economy will experience the best possible rate of growth and we will be able to address, in the most effective way, the economic problems that we face in our country.

LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, the Minister confirmed again today that he is monitoring the situation. Yesterday he said:

If need be, we will make the necessary adjustments.

Do we not need adjustments when there are 1,476,000 unemployed? Do we not need adjustments when the interest rate has just gone up, when the dollar is sinking, and when inflation has started up again? For two months in a row we have had renewed inflation. How long do the unemployed and everyone else in the country who is suffering from your economic chaos have to suffer before you make those adjustments? Why not make the adjustments now?

Mr. Speaker: Order. In the interest of everyone, I am sure the Hon. Member for St. John's West will realize questions should be addressed to the Chair.

Mr. Crosbie: Through you, Mr. Speaker. I repeat the question.