

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

POSSIBILITY OF FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE TO DEAL WITH JOB CREATION

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister. I would like to ask him if he has taken the occasion in the past few days to discuss with the provincial premiers the immediate convening of a first ministers' conference to deal specifically with the critical unemployment situation and the joint governmental initiatives that could be taken to alleviate it?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker.

Miss MacDonald: It is a disappointment to learn that the Prime Minister does not seize upon every opportunity to discuss this matter with his provincial counterparts. Since the Prime Minister has not taken the opportunity to speak with them, is it his intention to write to the first ministers about the convening of a first ministers' conference to deal specifically with unemployment?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the hon. lady may have missed the earlier answers by the Minister of Finance who indicated that just last week he met with the provincial ministers of finance to discuss this very matter. The hon. lady might not realize that yesterday I met the premiers at a luncheon for Her Majesty. There was no question such as unemployment on the agenda.

Miss MacDonald: May I ask the Prime Minister if he understands that the first ministers, including himself, have a very real responsibility in this crisis situation.

● (1450)

[Translation]

POSSIBLE MEETING WITH QUEBEC MINISTER CONCERNING ECONOMIC ORIENTATION

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the Minister of Finance to whom I would like to wish a lot more success than his predecessors have had. That cannot be difficult.

Since the newspapers were reporting last week that the Minister of Finance had met with those in charge of the economic orientation of the government of Quebec at this time could the minister say when he is to meet with a Quebec minister, Mr. Landry, and can he say whether he has concrete proposals to make to the Quebec government?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this morning my colleague the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion and I met three Quebec ministers interested in economic problems. They told me about a program they want to put forward. We also discussed certain initiatives we intend to take and have already taken with respect to certain sectors of the Quebec economy. The results will be announced by each government at the appropriate time. The conversation was rather cordial.

Oral Questions

MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN QUEBEC

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question. I am pleased to see that the minister has seemingly acknowledged the need to cooperate with his counterpart of the Quebec government. If one were to judge by some of his recent announcements, it would rather seem that it was just the continuation of a policy of confrontation. Given the fact that one-fifth of Quebec youths are presently unemployed, can the finance minister give assurance to this House that in his forthcoming speech of Thursday evening he will present concrete measures to correct a situation that is almost disastrous, taking into account the prevailing unemployment rate in the province of Quebec?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, we have discussed today certain programs and I intend to make certain announcements this coming Thursday which will not directly be related to Quebec but will be directed toward all provinces of Canada, since we are responsible for the economic situation all across the country. Obviously, I made certain announcements in the past and I still intend to make others because there are particular problems in Quebec which are causing great worries to the rest of Canada and that is the political instability in that province.

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[English]

HEALTH

SUGGESTED WARNING ON LOW CALORIE PRODUCTS CONTAINING SUGAR

Mrs. Simma Holt (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question refers to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Bearing in mind that a ban on the use of saccharin was implemented on October 1 and that all the so-called low calorie products presently in the marketplace contain a product, sugar, known to be dangerous to at least 400,000 Canadians as well as to tens of thousands of visitors to Canada who suffer from diabetes, will the hon. lady take action to ensure that a proper and conspicuous warning is placed on the products wrongly called low calorie products to warn consumers of their sugar content?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the point of my hon. colleague is well taken. I have been looking into the saccharin issue ever since I was appointed minister, but I have not yet had time to look into the sugar issue, including the health hazards which sugared food represents for diabetic patients. I shall certainly look into it. However, I suggest to my hon. colleague that no conspicuous warning about the dangers of sugared food for diabetic patients will change the situation, as long as this type of food is left on store counters, in refrigerators or in cupboards at home where children can easily reach them.