

Oral Questions

from police forces, provincial governments, and federal departments, plus interest groups of the Elizabeth Fry Society and Bay Street and so on was a great success.

I think this will interest the members on the other side. Twenty-five to 30 people from that group are now working on a national strategy on crime prevention. It is very good to get those people together to help us to define the parameters to improve and to spend in a better way the money we have on crime prevention.

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EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, I have here a copy of a confidential report produced in the winter of 1993 by the International Monetary Fund which I will be happy to table with the House.

This report was done in co-operation with the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Mr. Crow. The report cites a figure of 8.75 per cent as the natural rate of unemployment in this country. This is apparently a figure accepted by this government as a benchmark for Tory economic policy making.

My question is a very simple one for the minister. Can he explain to this House what exactly natural unemployment rate is?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I have not seen the document to which the hon. member is referring.

If she wants to send it over to me I will take a look at it and see in what context it is being used. If the hon. member is asking me about the unemployment situation I can tell her very clearly that the current level of unemployment is too high as far as I am concerned.

We are taking every reasonable step possible and available to ensure that that is turned around. It starts with low interest rates, low inflation, getting the fundamentals right and fiscal consolidation along with the kinds of adjustment programs necessary to facilitate the restructuring to ensure that we can continue to be competitive, productive and a major exporting nation.

That is exactly what is happening. That is why we are seeing growth in the goods producing sector and that is why we are going to see jobs and more jobs.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, I find it fascinating that the Minister of Finance would suggest that he does not know that the current use of the term natural rate of unemployment is that the government is accepting the lowest level that can be expected in Canada.

At a recently held conference hosted by the institute for research on public policy attended by senior government representatives and academics it became clear that the government is comfortable with a natural rate of unemployment in the range of 7 per cent to 8 per cent. The entrenchment of a high rate of unemployment is seen by this government as a good thing to establish its policies and to keep inflation down.

My question is this. How can this government willingly embrace and promote the misery of almost a million unemployed Canadians by establishing a policy that has an 8 per cent unemployment rate being okay? Is it just going to wipe out the unemployment line like it did the poverty line?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is incorrect in her assumptions.

If she would look at page 40 of the budget that was tabled in April 1993 she would find that we are projecting an unemployment rate of 7.5 per cent average in the period 1995–98.

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FISHERIES

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries.

It is now three weeks since the minister of fisheries announced details of his so-called adjustment measures for Atlantic fishermen and plant workers. These same fishermen and plant workers are still being forced to endure endless and arbitrary delays by this minister and his department in implementing what is already a meagre aid package.