

Oral Questions

Obviously none of us rejoices in the current level of unemployment. It is a concern for all of us. It was indicated to the Member on earlier occasions that we on this side of the House have worked consistently to bring about the circumstances in which jobs can be created. The inflation rate in Canada has been sharply reduced. The productivity of Canadian industry has improved greatly. Our export trade reflects that achievement, both in terms of lower inflation and in terms of higher productivity. I do not doubt that the circumstances are there for additional private sector growth as well as public sector support for greater employment opportunity in Canada.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I hope the Minister will explain that statement when he gets outside the House.

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I will direct my supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister. There is still presumably a Government in this country, Liberal leadership race notwithstanding. In the midst of this deepening economic crisis, what action can we expect from the Government to treat this matter with the urgency it deserves? Can I get an assurance from the Acting Prime Minister that regional Ministers, political Ministers in the Government are not holding back millions of capital works funds for an election slush fund when there are 800,000 young people unemployed?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the inference of my friend's question is that the Government is not trying sufficiently. I have figures here which indicate the extent of investment by the Government in job creation and job training at this moment; for example, \$1.246 billion for job creation and \$1.266 billion for training. The results are beginning to show. For example, job creation in 1984-85 will result in 265,000 jobs and 281,000 in job training. I could go on. Applying it to youth, there is \$634 million for job creation and \$493 million for job training.

My friend has to accept that a major effort has been made by the Government. This is not something which will be done in the future; the investment has been made. The results cannot be obtained in one week. There is a continuing process in the effect of these investments that have been made by the Government. As well, I am sure that he will agree that there is a need for the co-operation among different elements of society.

● (1125)

When the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources announced the remarkable Husky project a few days ago, a big project which will create 3,500 jobs, he underlined the importance of co-operation between the federal Government, the provincial Governments, and the private sector. Similarly, when the Minister of DRIE announced the Honda project the other day, he emphasized the importance of international negotiations. I am sorry to say that this is a process out of which results take time in coming.

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the Acting Prime Minister did not give the Hon. Member for St. John's East the assurance that regional political Ministers are not holding back funds that should now be put into the unemployment program.

UNEMPLOYED FEMALE HEADS OF FAMILIES

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Finance. Yesterday the Minister of State for Youth admitted that the unemployment crisis really does touch some 800,000 young people in the country and, by the same criteria, touches some two million Canadians across the country. Included in that figure of two million is the highest number of unemployed women who are heads of families ever recorded for this month. These women have homes to keep and families to feed. I would like to ask the Minister what programs the Government has to bring these women into the mainstream of the labour force of the country. I do not want him to tell me that these women are lazy, or that their children do not need food and clothing.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member opposite knows that the growth in the labour force in Canada has included a greater number of working women and a greater number of young people than in previous years. She knows as well as I do that during this year we in Canada created some 71,000 new jobs on top of those that we had already created since the beginning of the recession, bringing the total to some 441,000 new jobs. Of those additional jobs, the participation rate for young people has recently increased. The basic purpose of the Government is to create circumstances under which every Canadian can find a job.

We on this side of the House are going to continue to work to provide direct funding for retraining and training programs so that women, for example, can participate more effectively in the job market. We are going to continue to provide tax incentives in the R and D area to ensure a greater degree of technological improvement in our industries. We are going to continue to provide more financing for exports so that the economy benefits from the jobs created as a result of our sales abroad.

I could cite for the Hon. Member opposite a whole range of specific policies which are in place, but she knows of them as well as I do. We will continue to pursue those policies so as to create the greater opportunities she and I both seek.

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, what the Minister does not realize and does not come to grips with when citing those statistics is the fact that since 1980 the number of unemployed women who are heads of families has doubled. It is of little comfort to them to be told that the labour force has grown.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct the Minister's attention to