

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the Georgetown plant in the riding of the Minister for Veterans Affairs is one of the great priorities of the Government and of my Department. Because of the efforts of my colleague, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, I will soon be announcing developments regarding it. I would like to emphasize to the people of Prince Edward Island that, if my efforts prove successful, it will be due to the support I had from the Prime Minister, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, and all of the Cabinet rather than the Opposition.

TIMING OF PLANT REOPENING

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same Minister. The Minister's colleague, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, last summer gave the people of Prince Edward Island a firm commitment that the plant in Georgetown would be opened imminently. Recently he said it would be opened in time for the new fish season in May. Who is misleading the people of Prince Edward Island—the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans or the Minister of Veterans Affairs? Will the Minister rise today and give a firm commitment to the fishermen of Prince Edward Island that that plant will be open in time for the new fish season in May? Yes or no?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, there is no limit to the hypocrisy of the Official Opposition. When I recently tabled a Bill regarding the fishery, their slogan was that the Government should not intervene, it should be left to the private sector. In the same breath he is criticizing my colleague for not opening it himself. For weeks they have been saying the Government should not be involved, that the private sector should do it.

Mr. McMillan: Yes or no?

Mr. De Bané: I will be making an announcement about it in the near future—it is not a question of months—and if it is going to re-open it will be due to the sole efforts of this Government. The Official Opposition has shown its hypocrisy in the whole issue.

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT—STATEMENTS MADE BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR YOUTH

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance following up on the questions the Hon. Member for Oshawa raised. Is the Minister aware that among young people the unemployment rate has gone up to about one in five? Does the Minister agree with the remarks made this week by one of the newest Ministers of the Cabinet, the Minister of Youth, when she said that if we do not tackle the problem of youth unemployment a generation will be sacrificed, or a generation will revolt? She said that if she were in the youth group she would not tolerate excluding

herself from participating in society. Does he agree with those remarks and, if so, what will he do for young people and their tremendous unemployment rate?

● (1140)

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Hon. Member said, in the last month unemployment among young people has not gone up, it has gone down. I would invite him to check the figures in that regard.

The Government has announced in the Speech from the Throne a very firm commitment to try to alleviate the very serious problem of unemployment among young people. The special \$1 billion fund that has been allocated for the purpose of addressing the problem of youth unemployment is a clear indication of our commitment and determination to try to address this problem very seriously. The appointment of a Minister with special responsibility for youth is another indication of our concern and determination to address this problem and to make sure that all of our activities in Government bear in mind the impact of our many programs on youth.

Thus, I think my hon. friend is waking up rather late to a very serious problem of which the Government has been very conscious. It is a problem on which we have taken steps a long time ago, and have taken further steps in the last few months. The record is there. We are indeed very concerned about the problem of high unemployment among our young people. We want to address it, and have addressed it. If we can find better ways to do it than we have, we will implement those also. This Government has shown its commitment in that regard.

Mr. Waddell: The Minister suggests that I am a long time waking up. I remind the Minister that this problem of one in five young people being unemployed, which is 20 per cent, has been there for six months.

SUGGESTED FUNDING FOR EMPLOYMENT IN SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Would the Minister be prepared to accept what I think is a positive suggestion? Instead of putting money into these temporary make-work programs, shuffling money from other programs, why does he not consider putting money into social service programs to employ young people, where the provinces have cut back, such as daycare or care for seniors? Would the Minister consider that positive suggestion to transfer some job creation funds out of temporary make-work projects into projects that include social services and real jobs for young people in Canada?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is denigrating the creation of short term work. I think that is an extraordinary mistake on his part. The most difficult factor which young people find hindering them when entering the labour force and getting employment is a lack of job experience. The short term job that is created, even if it is a short term job, is one which is in a sense a passport to continued employment downstream.