

Oral Questions

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): We will look forward to that, Mr. Speaker.

INDEXATION OF FAMILY ALLOWANCES AND OLD AGE PENSIONS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Since the Minister of National Health and Welfare has risen to reply for the Prime Minister, would he comment on the other remarks he made in response to questions when he emerged from the Meech Lake discussions, that the Government was still considering discontinuing the indexation of our family allowances and old age pension payments? Surely when we are talking about the most vulnerable element of our society, our citizens who need it most, that is not in the mind of the Government.

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I say to the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition that I did not make any statements coming out of Meech Lake, so I believe he should check that detail. Second, in terms of the position, or the debate which he is trying to recreate, I believe if the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition would examine my remarks he would find that what he has said does not stand that test, and the position we have taken very clearly is that the program which is in place, the universal program for the elderly and the family benefits, remains.

We are going to put forward a consultation paper. I hope that the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition can convince his caucus that, while they might have a political agenda which is valid from their point of view, there is a greater agenda, and that is how do we best protect the social programs for those who need them most.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. gentleman that our agenda is on behalf of the senior citizens and the families of this country. The fact that the Minister had to rewrite that paper during the Christmas holidays indicates just how important that agenda was.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN

PREMIUM LEVELS—HOMEMAKER'S PENSION PROPOSAL

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): My final supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance made a statement—and I hope he will confirm it—that the Government is contemplating raising the premiums on the Canada Pension Plan. That being so, where is the commitment that the Government made during the election campaign to introduce a homemaker's pension? If there are going to be these extra funds generated, where is the homemaker's pension? What is the Government's position on that particular subject?

• (1420)

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I made the comment, as the Right Hon. Member has indicated, in reference to the Canada Pension Plan premiums. That was the extent of the comment that I made. I would ask him to be patient in respect to the other question that he put.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

STUDENT SUMMER EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment. In less than three months thousands of Canadian students will be out of universities and colleges looking for jobs to pay for next year's tuition and other expenses. In November the Minister of Finance cancelled the successful Summer Canada Program, and so far we have had nothing announced to take its place. When, if at all, is the Minister going to announce a program for summer employment for students, and will it contain a direct employment provision so that we can make sure those students get the jobs they need before next year's term.

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, coming out of the very successful federal-provincial conference on employment strategies last Thursday, I stated at that time that summer programs for students would be finalized within a couple of weeks. I may say that I am pleased to tell the House that those programs will have the co-operation of the provincial Governments and the private sector. I may also add that these programs will be more career-oriented than those of the past, so that students working this summer will be able to use that experience as a training ground for permanent jobs in the future.

CAREER ACCESS PROGRAM INQUIRY

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, it has been customary to announce the summer program well before Christmas. We are now into the month of January and we still do not have anything. As everyone knows, it takes a good deal of lead time to put these programs into operation successfully.

The Minister talked about career oriented programs. Last year, as part of the Summer Canada Program, we had Career-Access, a very successful program. Will she continue that program in this summer's program?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the Hon. Member, there are many aspects of Career-Access still in operation. He may not be aware of that. Indeed there will be many programs that will be announced for this summer, and I think when the Hon. Member sees them he will be very satisfied.