

included in his budget of 250,000 new jobs this year and would he indicate what sector he expects will produce these jobs?

● (1420)

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, these are questions that were very fully canvassed in the course of the budget debate. It does not seem useful to repeat them at this point. Of course, it will be difficult to say within the context of any monthly period when they will change or indeed in what aspect of industry. I would just remind the hon. gentleman that we have set out our expectations for the year in a rather comprehensive way.

LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT PREDICTED BY CONFERENCE BOARD—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): A further supplementary to the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker. Noting that the minister has already stated today that he has no new programs that he cares to announce today for job creation, and in view of the fact that the Conference Board of Canada has predicted steadily rising unemployment rates throughout 1976-77, can he identify any factors which in his opinion indicate why the current economic situation would not lead this House and himself to view the forecast put out by the conference board as being inaccurate?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I should like to correct the hon. gentleman. The conference board substantially agreed with our analysis for the year 1976. Its prediction with regard to unemployment was an unemployment increase with respect to 1977. I think as the year goes on we will want to review the facts as they turn up to see whether or not that seems to be a substantially founded expectation.

Mr. Stevens: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Does the minister stick by the budget forecast of 250,000 new jobs for 1976 and would he explain if he means average 1976 figures over average 1975 or January to January figures?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we consider all the statements set out in the context of the budget still to be those guidelines governing the development of the economy.

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AGRICULTURE

POTATO MARKETING SCHEME—DATE OF INTRODUCTION

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture of which I have given him notice, with respect to the important meeting last week with representatives of the potato industry from five of six of the eastern Canadian provinces, at Fredericton. Considering the fact that just prior to the meeting one of the officials of the New Brunswick government indicated that they hoped to have a plan in place for marketing by mid-September for this marketing year, could the minister

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indicate what progress was made at the meeting, when producers will have an opportunity to study the new revised plans and to vote on representation for a regional potato marketing council?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the meeting that took place. This is an ongoing thing. These meetings of potato producers have been taking place between the provinces for well over a year. They have been trying to formulate a plan for marketing potatoes. I understand that they should soon be able to make recommendations to producers and I understand it will be further discussed at a meeting of provincial ministers of agriculture if they can work it into their schedule at the end of this month in Quebec City. I understand representations are being made by ministers from other potato producing provinces in which it appears the producers are going to be in dire straits again this year.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In view of the importance of these measures to the potato industry in the six eastern provinces and the importance of there being adequate funds and personnel to establish an effective secretariat, can the minister indicate whether a commitment was made by the federal government at this meeting to supply funds and appoint personnel so that the decisions taken by producers and the representative ministers can be put into effect for this marketing year?

Mr. Whelan: We would hope so, Mr. Speaker. It would need the utmost co-operation of all parties concerned so that some kind of plan could be put into operation for the coming crop year. The hon. member will recall that two years ago we spent approximately \$16 million during the crop season because of the depressed prices. At that time we said that would be the last time we would put that kind of money into such a program and that they had better find a more orderly marketing system. That is what these meetings have been concerned with. It appears that the provinces and the potato producers, who are represented on the committees, are close to a plan at the present time but I am not in a position to say what it will be. I have not gone over anything since the meeting in Fredericton, not having had the time. I have received verbal reports about the meetings. They realize the seriousness of this matter and I believe they are serious about doing something about it.

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PUBLIC WORKS

REASON FOR ENTERING INTO TERRASSE DE LA CHAUDIÈRE LEASE-PURCHASE AGREEMENT—CONTROL OF CONSTRUCTION COSTS

Mr. Ron Huntington (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Public Works is with reference to the Terrasse de la Chaudière lease-purchase agreement. I wonder if the minister can tell the House why his department apparently agreed in principle to lease a building on which construction had not commenced, to be built on land which the lessor at the time did not own, in light of the fact that the minister said yesterday that this would be a rather strange lease arrangement.