

Oral Questions

should also read what the Chairman of the Economic Council of Canada had to say in a recent speech in which he stated that Canadians, and particularly Members opposite, I must add, were unduly pessimistic about the Canadian economic outlook.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER CONFIRM NEWS OF POLITICAL
FUTURE

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Since the Minister of Finance is saying that my comments are without foundation, Mr. Speaker, I shall have to repeat that, a month ago, he derided the Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis) for saying that the unemployment rate would now be 13.3 per cent. The Minister of Finance made fun of the Hon. Member for Simcoe North and said that his figures were absolutely wrong.

This morning, it was announced that we have an unemployment figure of 13.4 per cent. In Quebec, unemployment exceeds 22 per cent in some regions. There is the case of Schefferville, where jobs have long been lost because of a Liberal policy—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. La Salle: And the Minister fails to realize or is incapable of understanding—

Mr. Mulroney: How true!

Mr. La Salle:—not only that the Liberal policies have resulted in the Schefferville shut-down, but also that thousands of other businesses have had to close because of the lack of appropriate policies.

In view of the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Minister of Finance whether it is true, and this could be the best bit of news that Canadians will be hearing today, that he is considering taking on new responsibilities. Obviously, we would be most happy if this country were to get rid of the present Minister of Finance, who has made the Canadian people suffer for too long already.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): I hope this weekend the Hon. Member will take the trouble to read not just the financial program I tabled with the budget, but also the figures published today by Statistics Canada. He said that the unemployment figure published this morning was 13.4 per cent. He made his big emotional statement saying that the unemployment rate was now 13.4 per cent.

Mr. La Salle: 11.4!

Mr. Lalonde: The unemployment rate is now 11.4 per cent and not 13.4 per cent, but even this is too high.

Mr. La Salle: 11.4!

Mr. Lalonde: The Hon. Member should at least stick to the truth and not state in the House that the unemployment rate has reached 13.4 per cent.

Concerning the Government's unemployment projections for this year and the following years, we expect that the unemployment figures will go down gradually, and this forecast was made when the budget was brought down. Contrary to the statements made by the Hon. Member and others among his colleagues who seem to know as little as he does on this matter, it is expected that unemployment in Canada will fall below 10 per cent within the next five years.

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● (1200)

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

SITUATION OF CANADIANS IN CAMEROON

Mr. Pierre Deniger (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for International Trade. The Minister is surely aware that Cameroon was the scene of a coup d'État yesterday and that hundreds of Canadians, including many residents of the riding of La Prairie, are now in that country. Would the Minister tell the House whether he is aware of the situation, whether he has been in touch with our embassy and what is the situation of Canadians who are now in Cameroon?

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the current situation in the Republic of Cameroon is not clear, but we do not think that the Canadians who are there are facing an immediate danger. There are 280 Canadians in that republic—

[English]

We hope to have more information on the development of the coup, in the next few hours. Our present information is that there is no reason for concern regarding the Canadians who are there.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member for Halifax West (Mr. Crosby) has served notice to the Chair of a point of order.

Mr. Paproski: Privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Halifax West has served notice to the Chair.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. CROSBY—STATEMENT UNDER S.O. 21

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, it is a question of privilege that I want to raise and I can state it very