

Prime Minister intend to keep this promise to the people of Canada and, if so, when will this important committee be established?

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, we are giving very serious consideration to the means by which a committee of that kind might be established. My colleague, the President of the Privy Council, is preparing a document proposing a variety of changes in committee organization in the House as part of a parliamentary reform package. One of the problems we have now, as the hon. member knows, is that this government has referred almost too much work to committees and we intend to refer even more with the establishment of certain select committees.

We do have certain difficulty in having to get agreement from the House to pass references quickly without debate, which can become too long once committees are established. We intend to reform the committee system of the House of Commons and we intend, in regard to the particular matter which the hon. member has raised, to give the most serious consideration to establishing a committee of that kind or some equivalent arrangement that will serve the same purposes.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

MEASURES TO ASSIST UNEMPLOYED IN ATLANTIC AND GASPÉ REGIONS

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Matapédia-Matane): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance.

Given the fact that, according to a study made by the Economic Council of Canada entitled "Living Together", when the rate of unemployment for Canada goes up by 2 per cent, that for Ontario increases by barely 1 per cent while that for the Atlantic region or the Gaspé region rises by 4 per cent, can the Minister of Finance assure us that when he brings down the budget he will take tax measures to ensure that when expected difficult times come, the areas of the country whose economy is the weakest will not suffer more than the others from the recession, especially inasmuch as the Economic Council feels that tax and budget measures, to borrow their phrase, are like an elephant compared with the department of Regional Economic Development, which they call a flea?

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I can certainly assure the hon. gentleman that I have areas such as he mentions very much under consideration, as does the government generally. We intend to make and continue to make a thrust to overcome so-called regional disparity. I will certainly keep his representation in mind. As far as that is concerned, any group of people who may be suffering in any part of the country will be kept very much in our mind.

Privilege—Mr. Lalonde

[Translation]

INQUIRY AS TO DATE OF BUDGET

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary to the Minister of Finance.

Can the minister tell the House whether he has decided on the date for bringing down his first budget?

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I hope to make an announcement next week about the date.

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[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

MR. LALONDE—LACK OF ANSWERS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Outremont): I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Outremont on a question of privilege.

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, during the oral question period this morning, you drew the attention of all hon. members, on both the opposition side and the government side, to the time taken up by the first round of questions and answers.

I can assure you, on behalf of the opposition, that we take your comments in good part and that we do realize that hon. members themselves are the losers when the first round lasts too long.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Outremont.

Mr. Lalonde: I also want to assure you, Mr. Speaker, that we are eager to co-operate with you and the whole House so as to make sure that during question period we will cover as many subjects as possible and give opportunities to all members of the House to ask the questions they want to raise about their constituents.

In addition, I would like to get assurance that we will obtain answers to the questions being asked. For example, regarding energy there were three simple questions asked this morning that could have been answered by a yes or no. The first concerned whether there had been contacts with the ambassador to ensure supply from Iran. The second one was whether there had been contact with the multinational oil companies to ensure there would be no diversion in supply destined for Canada. The third question was when the emergency board which was promised to be set up will be set up.

These were simple questions which could have been answered in ten seconds or less. What we had this morning was an example of what we have had since the beginning of the session.