

*Oral Questions*

expressed its concern and has followed this up with action, not on a month to month basis, but going back to the application of about one-quarter billion dollars being spent on the first phase of Canada Works; the federal labour-intensive program announced and administered by my colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, and the employment tax credit which the Leader of the Opposition chooses to ignore.

When that legislation was brought in, it is to the credit of my department that the civil servants worked day and night to put it into operation so that private enterprise could take advantage of what I think is an excellent program. I think it will prove itself. I have some confidence and faith in the private sector, but the Leader of the Opposition does not seem to have that. To suggest that nothing is being done is just not in accordance with the facts, Mr. Speaker.

● (1422)

**Mr. McGrath:** Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the country has no confidence in this government. The minister seems to ignore the fact that this is a national emergency, of national proportions. Given the fact that in the industrial heartland of the country we now have an unemployment rate hovering at over 7 per cent, and an unemployment rate in the industrial cities of Ontario hovering at around 12 per cent, with only 32,000 jobs available in Canada today for over one million unemployed, is the minister going to laugh that off and carry on with his statistical shell-game, or is he going to own up to his responsibility and tell the House and the country what he proposes to do, as minister of employment, to meet this tragic, emergency situation?

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, talking about a shell-game and playing with statistics, I suggest the hon. member is doing just that. A million jobs changed hands in Canada in the course of a year. To suggest that only that number of jobs is available is not in accordance with the facts. We have put programs in place. Notwithstanding the hon. member's suggestion that there are discouraged workers, it is rather interesting that these so-called discouraged workers have more confidence in this country than the opposition has, because the size of the labour force continues to increase. That is the problem we have.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, there are 33,000 more young people working this month than there were last month; there are 27,000 more adult women working this month than last; and some 8,000 more adult males working than last month. Jobs are, in fact, being created. As my colleague, the Minister of Finance, has stated, the people of this country have more confidence in this country and this government than the opposition would like to believe.

[Mr. Cullen.]

**THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**

## COMMITTEE STUDY OF PROPOSALS FOR CREATING JOBS

**Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo-Cambridge):** Mr. Speaker, I direct my question to the Minister of Finance. It relates to the proposal put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I think it is a good proposal. The minister did not give an answer to the proposal.

When the official level of one million unemployed is reached, it becomes a national emergency which calls for special measures of the House of Commons. Will the minister, therefore, consider putting together an all-party committee, because some of these problems may not be capable of solution in a partisan way but could be solved by putting together an all-party committee to look at the horrible situation of unemployment in Canada seeking a solution to which deserves the co-operation of all members of the House?

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, the rules of this House provide for the Minister of Finance to appear in front of the committee of the House. I do so once or twice a week.

**Mr. Stevens:** We cannot get you there.

**Mr. Chrétien:** I will give credit to the hon. member, who once in a while engages in a serious discussion and puts forward some propositions. Generally speaking, when I am there very few questions are asked of me by the official opposition on a specific proposition like that. Most of the propositions put forward by the Leader of the Opposition say that he will cut expenditures by \$2 billion. But he has never been able to come forward with any proposal that amounts to any significant amount of money.

**Mr. Clark:** That is because you can't count.

**Mr. Chrétien:** It is misleading the people of Canada to make such propositions.

**Mr. Saltsman:** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Finance. I appreciate his comment about me. Nevertheless, even granting, as I pointed out, the partisan nature of these meetings—it is the sort of “business as usual” method—this is not “business as usual” any more. Once the figure of one million unemployed is reached, it is a national emergency. It seems to me incumbent upon the Minister of Finance at least to try putting together a committee of the House of Commons to see if joint proposals can be made to solve unemployment in Canada.

[Translation]

**Mr. Chrétien:** Mr. Speaker, under the circumstances, I do not propose setting up a special committee designed to deal with this problem, although it is a serious one. Our economy is going through a period of adjustment. The unemployment situation is very serious at this time and is of much concern to us. The labour force participation rate reached a record level this month and if it had remained the same as last month, the