

Oral Questions

● (1130)

BANKS AND BANKING**INCREASE IN PROFITS OF CHARTERED BANKS—INCREASED CHARGES TO FARMERS AND SMALL BUSINESSMEN**

Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood): In light of the fact that the profit figures for the chartered banks today indicated a substantial increase, up 49 per cent—an increase which follows a 27 per cent rise for all chartered banks for the period between 1979-80—and since tax rates for the chartered banks are still at 20 per cent, will the minister now reconsider his government's rejection of a policy which would require the chartered banks to set aside a fixed portion of their financial portfolios for mortgage loans, loans to farmers and small businessmen, at rates which bear some relation to their costs, and the borrowers' ability to pay, so that we can stop this policy of driving people to the wall and forcing idleness and real hardship on the Canadian people?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I may have misunderstood the member's first question. I thought he drew upon Statistics Canada and its information to demonstrate certain employment trends in the construction industry. Then in his next question he said that we should disregard Statistics Canada—

Mr. Rae: That is not what I said.

Mr. MacEachen:—upon which he relied in his earlier question, because it is not reliable.

Mr. Rae: That is just misleading.

Mr. MacEachen: Maybe the hon. member would clarify his own thinking before he puts questions to me on the orders of the day.

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CORPORATE AFFAIRS**INVESTIGATION OF URANIUM INDUSTRY—ACCESS TO CABINET DOCUMENTS**

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. It touches upon the question I raised with the Prime Minister yesterday, to the effect that if the Prime Minister, and now the minister, could assure the House that all information, including all cabinet documents, such as minutes and memoranda, were shown to the director of investigation under the Combines Act and, if they were not, why were they not. I ask this question because it was rather startling to hear the Prime Minister say yesterday that he did not know of any documentation not having been shown to the director, since it is our understanding that it was the Prime Minister who carefully stashed these documents away so that the director could not see them.

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, I regret having to tell the hon. member that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs does not get involved in the investigations conducted by the director of combines investigation. It would be improper for the minister to interfere in the work of the director. Therefore, I cannot answer that question. I have no information whatsoever on the documents which the director may or may not have studied. The mandate of the director is to make his investigation and I take it for granted that he did a good job.

*[English]***LAYING OF CHARGES**

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, my question is again for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In light of the fact that the report, which we understood was to be made public, has now been referred to the Minister of Justice, with no guarantee that it will ever be made public, and in view of the fact that the Prime Minister stated that "In so far as any other illegalities having been entered into by anybody, producers or for that matter the government, we hope it will come out in the investigation by the combines investigation office"—would the minister indicate to the House why he feels it is fair to ask the Canadian public to accept this degree of secrecy, bearing in mind that it is like asking suspects in a group to pass judgment as to whether other members of the group should be charged with certain illegalities?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, it is obvious that the hon. member's attitude is changing as weeks go by. Only a few days ago he and the members of his party made a fuss over the departure of Mr. Robert Bertrand, the director of investigation. In their opinion, that man was highly qualified to carry those investigations through to their successful conclusion. Today, the hon. member seems to believe that Mr. Bertrand did not do his work properly. Madam Speaker, I am convinced that in the discharge of his responsibilities, the director of investigation used all his powers to conduct a successful investigation.

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*[English]***THE ECONOMY****REQUEST FOR CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. One of the really disturbing tragedies in Canada today is that month after