

is going up—food, housing and clothing. When will he take some new steps, or will he step aside and let someone else try?

An hon. Member: Bring on Kaplan.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I welcome the hon. member back from his sojourn abroad, and I welcome his questions which, as usual, are much more penetrating than those of his successor which we heard this morning.

Mr. Nowlan: It does not make any difference; the answers are as dull.

Mr. MacEachen: And much more to the point. I should tell the hon. member it is true that the cost of living for the past month has gone up. The main cause of the increase in that period was the dramatic and sharp rise in the price of food, especially for fruits and vegetables, which rose by 8.8 per cent—

An hon. Member: What about housing, Allan?

Mr. MacEachen:—and 18 per cent for fresh vegetables alone. I think the hon. member ought to know that this is a temporary situation which is beyond anyone's control and is mainly because of the weather situation in the producing areas of the United States.

• (1125)

REQUEST THAT MINISTER RESIGN

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Nothing can penetrate the minister's mind, apparently, because nothing can inspire him to action.

The minister said on September 9, 1980, 18 months ago in Halifax, that it was to create jobs, improve living standards and promote greater equity that he took on the position of Minister of Finance. However, all that has happened in the last 18 months is that living standards have gone down, equity has disappeared and we have the largest amount of unemployment in our history. Having failed in all those objectives that he boasted about in September of 1980, will he now resign and hand his portfolio over to someone else who will make a new effort, or does he stick by his statement of November, 1980, that Canadians will have to accept a lower standard of living and adjust to high energy prices? How can he continue in the face of his failure to meet those objectives he boasted about in Halifax just a year and a half ago?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Well, Madam Speaker, I will give give up when—

Some hon. Members: Yea, yea!

Mr. MacEachen: I will give up—

Mr. Stevens: We want Kaplan! Bring on Kaplan!

Oral Questions

Mr. MacEachen: I will give up my present portfolio when I have lost the confidence of the House.

Mr. Crosbie: You have! You have!

Mr. MacEachen: The fact of the matter—

Miss MacDonald: You have lost Robert Kaplan's.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: How about the cabinet?

Mr. Huntington: You are only there at the grace of the trained seals, Allan.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. MacEachen: Madam Speaker, the fact is that the budget policies have been before the House three times since the budget. Hon. members of the opposition have raised non-confidence motions three times. The budget has been sustained. I have been to bat three times. I have scored home runs.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacEachen: The only time the hon. member was at bat, he struck out, and we had an election.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

* * *

TRADE

NEGOTIATIONS ON IMPORTATION OF JAPANESE MANUFACTURED CARS

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): My question, Madam Speaker, is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. I hope he will give us some very straight answers to some very serious questions.

Mr. Nielsen: You have a hope.

Mr. Nystrom: On February 24, in response to questions I put to the Minister of State for International Trade, he said he was confident of negotiating a reduction in Japanese cars imported into this country. This morning we heard some very disturbing news reports on Radio-Canada which stated that the minister has failed to negotiate a reduction in Japanese cars coming into Canada. Are these reports accurate? If they are, can he provide the House with more details?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, it is true that the negotiations to this point have not gone as well as we would have wished. We have not attained our objectives in those negotiations. The meetings will be continuing, not between ministers at this point but, rather, between officials. Certainly, in any event, this is a lengthy process in which we try to impress strongly and clearly on the Japanese our needs with respect to the automotive market.