

Oral Questions

constituency was necessarily part of this group. The government wants to alleviate the extremely high rate of unemployment in these constituencies, and I may point out that the 12 per cent rate will be applied next year and perhaps other constituencies will also be designated as part of this group.

[English]

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I see that the minister has now come into the House so that we do not have to have a backbencher answering a question on a major expenditure program of the government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: The minister will know that the selection of these constituencies is not based on the unemployment figures that are put out monthly by Statistics Canada; they are based on a formula that is drawn up in his office.

CONSTITUENCY ALLOCATIONS FOR JOB CREATION

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): My supplementary question is addressed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Will he guarantee that the constituency allocations for job creation to be announced next week will be significantly higher, greater than the amounts allocated last year in those constituencies where there has been a substantial recent increase in unemployment, such as areas in northern Ontario and the interior of British Columbia?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it appears to me, hearing the answer given by the parliamentary secretary, that he showed far more intelligence and sensitivity to the plight of the unemployed than was displayed in the question put forward by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Axworthy: I would say that the kind of arrogance displayed in her preamble just showed how serious the hon. member is in asking respectable questions of members on this side.

The formula is very clearly outlined. We take the labour surplus rates as they apply to every constituency. Furthermore a factor has been built into the calculations to take into account deterioration of unemployment in those areas. For instance, the province of British Columbia will be receiving three times the amount of employment money that it received last year, and as far as I can recall there is not one Liberal elected as yet in that province.

An hon. Member: There never will be, either.

● (1420)

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I say to the minister that with the way he is going with regard to unemployment there

will not be any Liberals elected in British Columbia or in many other parts of the country, if he and the Prime Minister have the courage to go to the country and put their policies to the test.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

QUERY RESPECTING NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED WITHOUT INSURANCE BENEFITS

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, the minister has said in his announcement that the special response feature of the program will be most useful to those people who will have their unemployment insurance benefits exhausted. Will he now give us the estimate of those Canadians whose unemployment insurance benefits will be exhausted during the coming fall and winter months? So far he has refused to do so, but he must now have an estimate of that group of Canadians since he has attached a \$41 million figure to it.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I think it is worth pointing out, again in response to the hon. member who seems to be trying to indicate that we are not concerned about the plight of the unemployed in the country—

Miss MacDonald: The million and a half.

Mr. Axworthy:—that it was her government when it was in power that cancelled all direct employment programs of the Government of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Axworthy: If we had followed through with the position taken by that government, there would be no programs of any kind for the unemployed of Canada. The fact of the matter is that what we are trying to do by establishing the special response fund is to be prepared and to take into account the kinds of concerns which people have, rather than ignoring them, as obviously her government did when it was in power.

FORMULA USED IN ALLOCATION OF FUNDS TO CONSTITUENCIES

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same minister. Would the minister explain to the House why the additional funds under the development component of the program he announced yesterday would be allocated on the basis of some kind of inexplicable labour surplus formula and not on the basis of the real unemployment rate, averaged over the last number of years, as supplied by Statistics Canada? While he is at it, perhaps he could tell us who devised this hairy-scary formula which provides funding for only Liberal constituencies?