

Oral Questions

sluggish growth and higher unemployment, which is, of course, little encouragement to those who are presently unemployed or those who will be unemployed, why is it necessary to wait until January 1977 to commence discussions with the provinces on a consultative basis regarding unemployment programs, as envisaged by the employment strategy, and has the minister actually stated that he finds it impossible to implement these programs before April, 1977?

Hon. Jack Cullen (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the sincere concern of the hon. member about the level of unemployment. That is a feeling which is shared by everyone; it is not something one can treat with equanimity. At the present time we have ongoing programs. The Minister of Finance has indicated part of the reason that this particular figure is so high and has laid at least some of the blame on the strike picture. After we announce our programs and announce that there will be \$100 million for LIP and \$40 million or so for the training program and other programs, we run into problems. Then, there is concern that there has not been enough consultation with the provinces. We propose to do that. Quite frankly, if our analysis of the situation is such that further measures are needed and needed immediately, then I will not hesitate to recommend them.

● (1420)

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I am not interested in a story from the minister. I want to know why, some eight or nine months after we first heard of this program from the former minister, the government is taking so long about this consultative process. Will the minister assure this House that he will contact his provincial counterparts to see to it that the consultative process does take place immediately so that there is a possibility that the programs to which it refers, that is employment strategy, can be introduced before April, 1977? Can the minister do that or does he not care?

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member knows that I do care and that I am somewhat ahead of him in that about two weeks after I assumed this portfolio I met with the provincial ministers to discuss any other areas in which we have to share some jurisdiction.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cullen: For example, there is the situation that arose in my own constituency where some 700 or 900 jobs are being filled by Americans now because we have not had proper apprenticeship programs to enable us to fill all these jobs.

An hon. Member: Whose fault is that?

An hon. Member: What are you doing about it?

An hon. Member: Get a new member.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the opposition seem to be yelling about whose fault it is rather than finding solutions.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[Mr. Alexander.]

Mr. Cullen: I would simply say that my provincial colleagues and I have been able to work very closely together. Some \$64 million has been spent on the apprenticeship training program alone, which is an area clearly within the jurisdiction of the provinces, so we are endeavouring to move in the areas where we have authority and where we can work together. The opposition would have us wave a magic wand and all the jobs would be created.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary. I should like to refer the minister to *Hansard* for October 28 with respect to this consultative process to which he has referred. At page 535 the minister is reported as saying:

I expect we will commence our discussions with regard to programs on a consultative basis probably early in January, 1977 with a view to implementing them in approximately April of that year.

I would ask the minister if he is really meeting his provincial counterparts now on a consultative basis as envisaged, and why we have to wait so long for this particular type of consultation that he required? I am asking the minister if he can not speed it up and contact the provincial—

Some hon. Members: Order, order!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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FINANCE

REASON FOR FAILURE TO CUT TAXES TO ALLEVIATE UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance who has told the House that the rate of recovery in Canada is about the same as that in the United States. I would remind the Minister of Finance that they have just changed the government in the United States because of the slow rate of recovery. Given the fact that we now have the highest level of unemployment in 15 years—since the last time we had a Tory government, I might add—I should like to ask the minister why the government cannot bring in a tax cut at this time which would not be inflationary because we are only operating at 85 per cent capacity in the industrial sector?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am not proposing to make any budgetary change at this point. I think it is clear, as I indicated in a reply to a previous question, that the unemployment figures at the present time, high as they are, have been of a regional nature. Indeed, in some parts of the country there are very substantial levels of employment. In these circumstances, it does not appear that at the moment at least a macro-economic change such as a tax cut would have the result for which we would both hope.