

Oral Questions

been considered by my hon. friends as a disguised way of giving orders.

Figures have been mentioned, for example, that this decision will affect 1.2 million travellers. That is not so. The commuters in this 1.2 million figure will continue to commute. The only thing we have suggested is that the provincial governments should take responsibility for those commuter services, and I dare say they will.

REASONS FOR MINISTER'S DECISION

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Madam Speaker, it may be clear to the Minister of Transport why the government has done what it has done, but many Canadians fail to understand how the minister is going to improve train service, create jobs, save energy and promote national unity by abandoning the Atlantic Limited and the Super Continental, two of the most heavily patronized trains in Canada. We would like to know how he figured that one out. If the minister's case for abandonment is as good as he says it is, why is he afraid of scrutiny in a public forum, the transport committee, the Canadian Transport Commission or Parliament itself? The people of Canada are furious about these cutbacks and they want a chance to show how well-founded their anger is. They want to be able to show the minister. I ask the minister just what is he afraid of?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I do not know where my hon. friend was three or five minutes ago when I suggested—I was the first one to do it—I would go to the committee and give explanations of the announcement I made on July 27. I am sure that through the committee we would reach a great number of people. That is the answer I have given to the question already asked, three or five minutes ago.

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THE ECONOMY

REQUEST FOR MEASURES TO COMBAT UNEMPLOYMENT

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Madam Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Finance. The minister will know that last month this country suffered the largest single increase in the jobless rate since 1945. He will also know there were 101,000 additional people unemployed in a single month. This now means we have in this country 980,000 people looking for jobs they cannot find. Those figures are devastating for the individuals involved and they should be unacceptable to the government. I ask the minister what he or his government intends to do to put these people back to work?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has referred to the unemployment statistic released for the last month for which the data is available. I must say that the figure came as a real surprise because the preceding figure was

7 per cent in August. It was the lowest unemployment figure in Canada since 1976. In addition to that, within the past year Canada was the only major country that showed a decline in unemployment. To record the largest single month-to-month increase ever in Canada was a very definite surprise and not forecasted by anybody. One wonders whether it represents a basic trend in the economy or whether it represents some aberration or a sampling error. In any event I take the hon. member's question at its face value and I wish to assure him that the over-all economic situation, including high and rising inflation and unemployment as registered last month, will be very much a part of the over-all economic policy I will be presenting as soon as possible in the budget.

● (1510)

REQUEST FOR INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Madam Speaker, I might say that the people who are unemployed and looking for work regard this as more than a sampling technique, as I am sure he knows, and are very interested in something more solid. It is time, Madam Speaker, the minister got out of theory and into practice, because people are being hurt. In particular, when the minister was talking in the past about employment growth he always talked about an increase in growth. We have dropped in employment growth by 188,000 jobs since last May, when the minister took credit for it.

I would finally ask the minister, when he brings in his budget, when he deals with any economic statement he wants to make, will he bring in real programs that help real people, and simply not sit in his office theorizing on the phone?

An hon. Member: Real jobs, too!

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am to some extent, surprised by the hon. member's question, suggesting that we are not interested in real people, that we are not developing programs for real people. It is my understanding that it was real Canadians who benefited from the best employment performance of any country over the last year. That occurred in Canada. We had the lowest unemployment figure in August that we have had in five years.

Mr. Crombie: Had.

Mr. MacEachen: We had the best unemployment drop—

An hon. Member: Give us an example.

Mr. MacEachen:—of any major country in the world, over the last year. But when these statistics—

An hon. Member: Bring yourself up to date.

Mr. MacEachen:—when these statistics were evident to the hon. member he was not getting up in his seat and saying, "Well done, you have helped real people in Canada." He gets up and talks when the figures get gloomy. It is my intention not to keep them gloomy, Madam Speaker.