

Oral Questions

France, Italy, and so on. Therefore I say this in answer to the preamble to the question by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition. In answer to his question about a statement, it has been made clear by the Minister of Finance that he would be making a statement to this House on the economy before the House adjourns.

NATURE OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, while 978 Canadian businesses went into bankruptcy and 12,000 Canadians lost their jobs, the Prime Minister was travelling around the world lecturing other people about what they should be doing in their countries. We want to know what the Prime Minister of Canada is going to do about the disastrous economic situation in this country, caused in large measure by his government.

On Friday the Minister of Finance deliberately indicated that he would not describe the changes which he is considering in economic policy as being major. He is considering some tinkering around the edges. My question was very clear. Will there be a major change in economic policy announced by the Government of Canada before the House of Commons rises? Will there be a major economic change?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, once again on the preamble to the question by the Leader of the Opposition who suggests that I was travelling around the world lecturing to other countries, I would point out to him that what was said in response to the situation as it concerns every other country vis-à-vis the United States is not something that was said in a lecture by me. It was said by the six other industrial countries meeting in Versailles, and by the representative of the European Economic Community. If there is any lecturing, it would seem to be in the highly industrialized nations of the world, including Japan, pleading with the United States to get its economic and financial house in order so that these devaluations of all our currencies, including Canada's, will not happen. Therefore the lecture, once again, is not mine, Madam Speaker. I heard the message repeatedly being conveyed by all those other leaders attending the Versailles Summit.

● (1420)

As to the question itself, whether the statement by the Minister of Finance will contain major or minor aspects, Madam Speaker, I think I can say truly from experience that no matter what the Minister of Finance says—

Mr. Nielsen: It is disastrous!

Mr. Trudeau:—the Leader of the Opposition will say, as his House leader says now, it is disastrous. In advance of knowing what the minister will say, the hon. member for Yukon says it will be a disaster; therefore, what is the point in trying to qualify it as major or minor?

REQUEST GOVERNMENT ADMIT POLICIES WRONG

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister can play his little games, while thousands of Canadians go out of work and while thousands of Canadians see their businesses fail. Someone across the way shouts, "Be serious." We are being serious here. If the Prime Minister were staying in this country and were listening to the messages of Canadians, instead of trying to deliver messages to other countries elsewhere in the world, he would know that the message from Canadians is that they have had enough of a government in Canada that will not act to solve their problems, and that they have had enough of a government in this country that blames everything on somebody else.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: They want action from their government here. The reason I asked the question in the way I did is that we have had too much experience in this Parliament with this government trying to deceive Parliament, and trying to deceive the people, by promising something that is less than what is delivered. I want to know whether the Government of Canada is going to have the courage to come before this House of Commons and admit that many of its policies are wrong and change those policies, before they throw thousands more Canadians out of work, before they drive thousands more Canadians into bankruptcy, before they cause thousands more Canadians to lose their homes because they cannot afford to renew their mortgages at the current rates of interest.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I honestly do not know why the right hon. member is accusing me of playing games in the answers I have given to his questions. I have suggested some of the statistics were perhaps not founded, but as to playing games, Madam Speaker, it would seem to me that the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition is playing games, when he stands up, shouts questions, and voices his indignation. We are all very disturbed at the economic situation in this country. The meeting in Versailles was convened precisely in order to help the highly industrialized countries of the world to try to seek a collective answer to that. Playing games, to attend such a meeting!

I wonder why the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, when he was prime minister, attended the meeting in Tokyo of the same Summit. Was he playing games? And why did he attend the Commonwealth meeting in Lusaka? Was he playing games? Or was he not, as we were seriously led to believe at the time, attempting to deal with some of the North-South problems, some of the questions which are important to all nations but especially to a nation like Canada which is so highly involved in international trade?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!