

Mr. Crosbie: You may not be interested, but the unemployed are.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Crosbie: What steps is the Minister taking to overcome the decline in personal disposable income, the decline in housing starts, the decline in momentum of retail sales? What steps will he take so that the recovery will be well rooted?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, it is not easy to answer all the Hon. Member's rhetoric in a few words. I may remind him that the Conference Board, to which he was referring, very clearly indicated this week, when it published a summary of forecasts made by 18 major organizations and forecasters, that this year and next year, growth in Canada would be very substantial and compare favourably with growth in the United States. I can assure him that the discussions I had at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in the last few days with my American and other colleagues have confirmed this trend, and international analysts expect that both Canada and the United States will experience greater growth than other industrialized countries in 1983 and 1984.

As far as personal disposable income is concerned, Madam Speaker, there will not be a decline but an increase in the personal disposable income of Canadians in 1983. Instead of declining, total housing starts will be close to 200,000 units this year, compared to 96,000 last year. As far as retail sales are concerned, the Hon. Member ought to know that their momentum has increased this year compared to last year. Retail sales in 1983 are expected to be substantially better than they were in 1982, and we need only look at sales in the automobile industry, which have been doing very well in recent months.

[English]

DECLINE IN PERSONAL INCOME

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, this is not rhetoric. I refer to the Minister's own Statistics Canada report of yesterday. That report reads:

Personal disposable incomes . . . declined by 5.8 per cent at annual rates in the first half of the year—

This is because of a number of factors, including the weak recovery of labour income, and increased taxes. Then it goes on to read:

Housing starts declined by 27.0 per cent in July—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure the Hon. Member realizes that that quotation is too long. All that is necessary at this particular time is to ask questions.

Oral Questions

Mr. Crosbie: Madam Speaker, my question to the Minister is this: in view of these facts, the only thing well rooted in Canada is the Minister's propensity for deceiving the Canadian people. When will the Minister take steps to assist in raising the personal disposable income of Canadians by reducing taxes, or by taking other steps to help the recovery that he says is so well rooted?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, as far as deceiving the Canadian people is concerned, I do not think anybody could beat members of the Conservative Party at that, particularly when one considers their Leader's statement in the House last week concerning the International Monetary Fund.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

BOARD'S PROJECTION

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, my final supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. Why does the Consumer Board of Canada say at page 3 of its report that real disposable income, or household incomes, once taxes and inflation have been accounted for, is expected to decline by nearly 2 per cent, thus giving the lie to the Minister who says the exact opposite in his answer?

Some Hon. Members: Order, order.

Mr. Crosbie: Why is it that the Minister is not telling the truth to the Canadian people and is attempting to deceive the Canadian people with these slanted statistics that he offers the House, while ignoring his own Statistics Canada and Conference Board Reports?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, one must assess the validity of the Hon. Member's claim in light of the fact that he refers to the Consumer Board when he is really talking about the Conference Board. He cannot even get the names right, so how can he get the figures right?

Mr. Crosbie: Statistics Canada.

Mr. Lalonde: As far as the personal disposable income of Canadians is concerned, I have indicated before and I repeat again that it is expected that, by the end of this year, the personal disposable income of Canadians will have gone up and not down as compared to last year.

LEVEL OF INTEREST RATES

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta): Madam Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Finance. In the Conference Board Report which was released yesterday, the Board takes the view that fears about inflation and huge government deficits will keep interest rates high for a long time to come. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance, therefore, if he agrees with the statement made in the House last week by the Deputy Prime Minister in response to a