

Oral Questions

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCEPOSSIBLE DELETION OF SECTION 158 TO MAKE TEACHERS
ELIGIBLE FOR BENEFITS IN SUMMERTIME

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I want to put a question to the Acting Prime Minister, of which I gave him advance notice.

On October 15, Mr. Justice Haddy made a judgment about the Unemployment Insurance Act, by declaring inconsistent and non applicable section 158, which theretofore prevented a teacher from receiving unemployment insurance benefits under certain conditions during summer. The Unemployment Insurance Commission had then appealed that decision, but withdrew its appeal last week.

Can the minister tell the House if it is true that an administrative decision must be made today to delete section 158 from the Unemployment Insurance Act in order to settle this problem which a great number of teachers have faced for several months?

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the umpire appointed under the Unemployment Insurance Act ruled that Section 158 of the Unemployment Insurance Regulations was invalid. However, the Unemployment Insurance Commission is reviewing the umpire's decision and the possibility of an appeal to the Federal Court of Canada against this decision is still in abeyance.

[Translation]

Mr. Beaudoin: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a supplementary question.

Since this section of the act seems to have been removed and reinstated many times, can the minister indicate whether the deletion of section 158 in the regulations will be definitive this time?

[English]

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me the important question is what happens to the various rights of those who might be affected. I should add to what I said previously that should the commission appeal and the decision of the Federal Court of Canada should result in a favourable decision for the teachers, all teachers who have appealed the commission's disentitlement under section 158 and are not otherwise disentitled will be paid benefits.

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TRADEPOSSIBILITY OF CHANGE IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE
BALANCE WHEN STATISTICS ISSUED BY STATISTICS CANADA

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce who is responsible for Statistics Canada. As the government's new method of reporting on unemployment shows a spectacular improvement in the situation—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

Mr. Hees: Just wait—when more than 100,000 additional people become unemployed during a month, will the minister tell the House if we can expect that when Statistics Canada makes its next report on our international trade balance we will see an equally spectacular improvement in that trade balance as our exports continue to decline rapidly and our imports continue to increase rapidly?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member I am bending every effort to have the next report of Statistics Canada show a spectacular increase in exports but it will not be because of the statistical position but because I am following the very good example of the hon. member when he was Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce which is getting up off my butt and selling something.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is very simple. I would ask the minister whether it is true that during the last month he has ordered that Alice in Wonderland to be required reading by all employees of Statistics Canada so that they can produce the extraordinary result we have seen today.

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STATISTICS CANADASUGGESTED REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE OF NEW METHOD OF
COMPILING UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. In view of the skepticism over the new methodology employed by Statistics Canada in arriving at unemployment figures in the country, especially when we consider for example that one wave of the Statistics Canada wand can reduce unemployment in Newfoundland from 17 per cent to 11 per cent, which the minister and I know is not the case, may I ask the minister if he would, in order to reassure members of the House, refer at the earliest possible moment to an appropriate committee of the House the whole new system employed by Statistics Canada in arriving at the unemployment figures in the country in order to assure members there is in fact no hanky-panky taking place between the government and Statistics Canada?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member was using a little rhetoric at the end when he referred to "hanky-panky", but he knows perfectly well that Statistics Canada has developed this system independently over the past few years.

On his other point about the Newfoundland figures, he and I may know differently but the Newfoundland government is now saying very clearly that these statistics prove what it has been saying all along. In any event, so far as the member's question about explanations is concerned, not only am I prepared to make a reference but I am sure that if members, either individually or as a group, wish to have a thorough briefing on the technique and incidentally