

Oral Questions

we ignore this problem today, the problem will get out of hand because inflation pressures are rising.

We had a 4 per cent inflation rate in 1988. We had a 5 per cent inflation rate in 1989. For the first part of this year, it has been in the 5.25 per cent or 5.5 per cent range. Unit labour costs rose at 6.3 per cent last year and, in the last quarter of 1989, at 6.9 per cent. So it is a problem that we have to deal with.

The hon. member is frowning in wondering about this high interest rate policy. I remind him that, when he and I sat together with Mr. Morton Shulman side by side, Mr. Shulman asked my colleague what would he do if interest rates continued to go up. Would he resign? The hon. member for Windsor West said: "Yes, I would resign." That was in early February of 1980.

What happened? Interest rates went to 20 per cent to 25 per cent. What did he do? He stayed right in his place in the House. He did not resign. He was just playing politics.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Defence.

I would like to ask the minister what initiative he has taken in light of the three CF-18 crashes in the last week?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and his tone.

We have suspended operational training in Canada until 900 hours on April 25. During that time, the Commander of Air Command, the Commander of Fighters, the Commanders of both Bagotville and CFB Cold Lake, and the squadron leaders will be meeting with regard to the process and recommendations that can be made to the minister to ensure the security and safety of the men and women who fly on behalf of Canada.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, there is a perception out there in the

Canadian public that there is something terribly wrong either with the CF-18 or the manner in which it is flown.

I have a supplementary question for the hon. minister. Would the minister consider getting together a "tiger-team" of experts to gather up all the information that is available about the previous CF-18 crashes, putting it under a microscope, getting in the room with the microscope, and staying there until we come up with the answers as to precisely what the reasons are for these tragic losses and the remedial action that should be taken.

Also, would the hon. minister consider making this information available to the Canadian public to address their concerns in a timely manner, and keeping at least the training flights of the CF-18s grounded until this occurs?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the "tiger-team" my hon. colleague suggests would be a team that is made up of squadron leaders, base commanders, and those involved in instruction in CF-18 Air Command.

The process that will be undertaken over the next 48 hours will arrive at a conclusion. When that conclusion, based on the best of military advice, has been communicated to me, I will inform the House, the hon. member, and the Canadian public. The hon. member knows as I do that there is no one more concerned about the safety of the men and women who fly than the Commander of Air Command, the squadron leaders, and those men and women who serve with them.

Everything that can will be done to identify what may be a shortcoming in the realism that we use today which may have crossed the line of safety. The Air Command has instituted that type of study. There will be a report by the end of May and when we have concluded these reports I will communicate to the House and to the hon. member.

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question as well is directed to the Minister of National Defence. Certainly my party wants to express our sadness and deepest sympathy to the families who have lost pilots in recent crashes in Canada.

I appreciated the minister's response to the previous question, but there are a number of outstanding questions about the computer systems, possible cutbacks to training, and the purchase. There are a number of