

*Oral Questions*

common sense image. When interest rates go up, two things happen: businesses go bankrupt, and there are fewer jobs. The second part of the rhythm is that Canadians need to work harder and more hours to make their mortgage payments. Was this the kind of insight, and can the Minister of Employment and Immigration, in his new role as the economic guru of the cabinet, indicate to us that the budget of November 12 will tackle the high interest rate problem so that there will be fewer unemployed and an increase in the gross domestic product?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, I would like to point out to the hon. member that every member of this government is very active and very strongly concerned about the state of the economy. This is not restricted to any one minister. It is a collective concern we have.

What we are attempting to do is maintain a balance between the obvious need for restraint of expenditures and the need to maintain some stimulus in those areas of the economy which need it most. It goes back to the basic principle this government has put forward of helping those who need help most. In that regard I would point out, as I have many times before to the hon. member, that it was this government which restored the direct employment program which his government had cancelled. There are now over 40,000 Canadians employed in direct employment programs who would not otherwise be employed because of the actions his government took when in power.

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● (1420)

**AGRICULTURE**

## SURVEY OF CONDITIONS IN INDUSTRY

**Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey):** Madam Speaker, my questions are directed to the Minister of Agriculture. The minister will know that, as the unemployment crisis which my colleague from Calgary West spoke of looms, about three million jobs in Canada are dependent upon agriculture. He will also know that a survey he has had done recently suggests that 48 per cent of one of the agricultural sectors appears to be in serious trouble. This has been supported by literally thousands of letters to the Prime Minister. Others say it is as small a figure as 1 per cent of agriculture which is in trouble. What percentage of agriculture does the minister feel is in trouble? What message has he communicated to his cabinet colleagues? What immediate action can we expect?

**Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture):** Madam Speaker, we have used the very quick survey done by our own people. In addition, we are using the accurate financial statements which have been sent to us. On checking, however, we find that many of these people are only lending their support to those in need. When we asked what financial problems they had, many replied that because they were a chicken producer, milk producer and so on, they had none, but were lending their

support to those in the red meat industry, beef first and then pork. All of this evidence is being used in our representations and the discussions we are having and have had with our colleagues who are concerned.

**Mr. Gurbin:** I am not clear what the minister said, but I think he said he does not really believe there is a problem.

## REQUEST THAT MINISTER ACT TO RELIEVE INTEREST RATE PRESSURE

**Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey):** Madam Speaker, farmers in Canada are increasingly concerned about the minister's apparent impotence in cabinet, particularly at a time when he is fronting for a government that has a high interest rate policy and constitutional diarrhea.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gurbin:** The only federal response we have had so far is an increase in the Farm Credit Corporation rates to 16.75 per cent, and that for funds that are not even available. Will the minister give this House a commitment to relieve immediately the high interest rate pressure on the agricultural economy?

**Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member has made several assertions or accusations as to how many people need aid. He could go to his good friend, the minister of agriculture in Ontario, who says that only 1 per cent of the farmers are in difficulty in that province. I dispute those figures, as I think he does. The facts we have show that there is as high a percentage as 47 per cent in certain parts of Ontario and some parts of Canada who are in grave financial difficulty. Those are the people we want to aid.

I must say the hon. member has made some good suggestions. But he has described certain discussions that are taking place concerning the constitution, and maybe his thoughts are constipated when he talks about what is very important to the economy and the discussions taking place between the first ministers and the Prime Minister today.

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**THE MINISTRY**

## USE OF GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT BY CABINET MINISTERS

**Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. Just before this past weekend the Prime Minister, at a \$175 plate Liberal dinner in Toronto, urged Canadians to maintain restraint, and stated that the Liberals were a party of sharing and caring.

**Miss MacDonald:** For one another.

**Mr. Broadbent:** Considering that thousands of Canadian families are losing their homes, farmers are in great difficulty, and businessmen are going broke, can the minister tell us why