

Oral Questions

would be worked out in consultation and in collaboration with the provinces, the business community, and labour groups.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: We did that because we believe this is a major task which will require us to work together, and not to have a program which is in conflict with the other partners in the economy. Unfortunately that is what First Chance was.

GOVERNMENT'S POSITION

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, is the Minister now admitting that throughout the two months of the election campaign, and for many months before that, she and her Party had no program or blueprint for the creation of jobs and training for employment? Is she now admitting that she misled the Canadian people, that she had no program, that she will now start from scratch consulting, reviewing, and looking for a program, and that she never had one in the first place?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): No, Mr. Speaker. I will admit no such thing because it simply is not true.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: Within days of assuming office we announced programs to create some 70,000 jobs, jobs which had not been put into effect or had no money allocated to them by the previous Government. It had not taken any steps to do that.

We were elected to change what was taking place, and we will. We will do that by working with our partners, not by fighting with them.

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FINANCE

IMPACT OF SALES TAX INCREASE

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister who, not many weeks ago, stood in the House and said that policies such as the Liberal sales tax increase would result in the 1.5 million unemployed Canadians having absolutely no hope for a job, and would inevitably create a recession in the country within a matter of months.

I know the Prime Minister campaigned for change. However, is this the kind of change, where he is simply changing his mind about a tax policy and in a sense saying to Canadians: "I had no option"?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I wish I had said that.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney: I think the Hon. Member knows full well, because of his very considerable expertise on the economic side, that indeed the situation we came upon after September 4 was rather worse than what our friends had let on. Thus we were forced to take some measures which, had we been in control some time ago, we would have preferred not to take.

Mr. Riis: I suspect the Right Hon. Prime Minister will perhaps wish that he had not made those statements, because in fact he had an option. He could have said: "I am not going to do it. This is wrong for Canada, and I am not going to ask Canadians to pay the price". He had an option and he said "No". He "chose to say yes to the old attitudes and the old stories of the Liberal Party".

REQUEST THAT DECISION BE RESCINDED

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is also directed to the Prime Minister. Knowing that since he has taken office we have lost 81,000 jobs in a very short period of time, that by his own admission we will be losing more and more jobs as a result of the sales tax increase, and that we will now be heading into a recession, again by his own admission, would he not now have the courage to stand before the House and say: "I am going to change my mind once again. I am going to go back to my original position and stop the introduction of legislation to impose that sales tax"?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member, as will his Leader, will be well pleased with the manner in which the Minister of Finance will come to grips with some very grave structural problems we were left by a Government which sat too long. We propose to deal with them in a very positive and productive way tomorrow night. I think the manner in which it is done will receive the support of all Members of the House, including the Hon. Member.

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AGRICULTURE

DROUGHT IN WESTERN CANADA—PAYMENTS TO GRAIN FARMERS

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. However, with your indulgence, and through you, I should like to offer my congratulations to the Hon. Minister on his appointment to a position which is of great importance to my region of the country. However, in saying that I should like to express the surprise and disappointment of many people in western Canada at the total lack in the Throne Speech of any reference to the serious drought conditions faced by farmers in that area.

Would the Hon. Minister and his Government consider bringing into the House today, with the full co-operation I am sure of all Hon. Members on this side, the proposals made last