

Oral Questions

In view of what appears to be the total abdication by his Government, faced with 2 million unemployed Canadians and a deficit now approaching \$30 billion, and without a single permanent job to show for it, does the Prime Minister not feel that the time has come for a total reversal of the Government's negative and self-defeating policy?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, of course the Hon. Member, when he talks about the total abdication of our duty to create jobs, is forgetting the more than \$2 billion which have been brought forward precisely to create jobs in the last June budget and in the Fall statement. The two together total more than \$2 billion, and it is hard to call that a total abdication.

Mr. Crosbie: Totally ineffective.

FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister in his response seems to be overlooking the assertion I made in my question of the fact that the country faces 2 million unemployed, and not a single permanent job has been created.

While he was away last week, no doubt justifiably, I put the question to his Deputy Prime Minister as to whether he will be viewing favourably the request put forward by Premier Buchanan on behalf of the Premiers for a full day at least to be set aside for a summit on the economy. I was given to understand, as we all were, by the Deputy Prime Minister in his response last week that it was still the intent to discuss the tragic unemployment figures somewhere between the vichyssoise and the filet mignon.

Will the Prime Minister, now that he has had time to reflect over the weekend, not consider Premier Buchanan's request on behalf of the Premiers favourably and respond positively that he has the time to set aside a full day at least, or whatever time it takes, to discuss with them the solutions to the problem?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I cannot understand how the Hon. Member has managed to read so incorrectly Premier Buchanan's telegram to me. Whereas I had suggested a meeting on the Wednesday night in order to ensure that we had dealt completely with the aboriginal questions before we got to the economy, a meeting on Wednesday night which I had said could go on to the Thursday in order to discuss medium-term economic issues while our Ministers were looking at the short-term budgetary question, Premier Buchanan did not answer that he wanted a full day. He answered that he wanted to have that meeting on Monday night, between the pears and the cheese. Therefore I do not see why the Hon. Member from Yukon prefers pears to vichyssoise, but that is a matter of taste. It seems to me, in terms of the time consumed in discussing the matter, that our propositions are pretty similar—

Mr. Crosbie: Let them eat cake.

Mr. Trudeau:—except that mine was on a night which was not already pre-empted by the Governor General who had invited all First Ministers and, of course, the aboriginal leaders. The purpose of the meeting, whether it be on one night or another, would be to discuss the broad term economic issues, and also of course to discuss among ourselves whether we think there should be a full First Ministers' conference on the economy sometime later in the spring.

Once again, I do not understand how the Hon. Member could interpret Premier Buchanan as suggesting a full day. He suggested a short time on Monday night, whereas I was suggesting a longer time on Wednesday night and again on Thursday during the day.

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INCOME TAX

FORECAST OF DELAY IN ISSUANCE OF REFUNDS

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue. The Minister will know that hundreds of thousands of Canadians, many of whom have lost their jobs due to the Liberal recession, are desperately waiting for their 1982 income tax refunds. Last year 6.5 million Canadians had received their refunds by the middle of May. This year the Government has stated that the refund cheques will not start going out until the middle of May. In view of the concern that is out there, and in view of the need for this money, I would ask the Minister how the Government can justify this unconscionable delay.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, I wonder when the Hon. Member heard the government state that the refund cheques would not be going out before the middle of May, for it is definitely not so. As far as I know, the government has never made such a statement. What we have been saying and which I repeat now is that we are waiting for the House to approve the legislation to amend the statute law relating to income tax, in order to issue cheques which reflect the new provisions in this bill. We believe the business of the House as scheduled will make it possible for Hon. Members to approve this bill before the end of March, in which case the time allocated for issuing cheques this year would be the same or about the same as last year.

[English]

LEGISLATIVE BASIS FOR REFUNDS

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, we received our information on cheques starting to go out at the middle of May, from the Director of Revenue Canada for Prince Edward Island. That is in letter form, if the Minister wants it.