

Oral Questions

refuse the same opportunity for Quebec. Why would what is good in the Atlantic and in the West not be good for Quebec, Mr. Speaker?

• (1420)

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that it was good neither for Atlantic Canada nor for Western Canada or any other part of Canada.

It is nothing but window-dressing, Mr. Speaker! Quebec is the businessmen's Mecca. They need sensible policies in order to prosper. The truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that this government spends more time covering up than dealing with the real economic problems of this country.

Here is my question, Mr. Speaker. What good will this do if the minister and his government keep the Canadian dollar at 86 cents, maintain absurd interest rates and do not come up with any adjustment policy for continental free trade?

Mr. Speaker, what we need is not blue patronage garbage, but good policies. When will we get them from you?

[*English*]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to know that for the Liberal Party having Atlantic management is not good for those regions of Canada. I am very pleased to know that.

[*Translation*]

I want to tell the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard that, in fact, by creating a special administrative structure for the management of Quebec economic and regional development, it will be possible to find Quebec answers to Quebec problems. What is wrong with that?

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister and deals with the creation of a Quebec regional development department or agency.

Will this department or agency get more money? No. Will the minister institute a consultation process on regional development with the Quebec government and the people of Quebec? Does this government intend to appoint a committee to discuss with the people of

Quebec how these regional development grants should be administered?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I do not think that this government feels it has to immediately inject new funds simply because an administrative structure is set up.

I am always amazed that the opposition party the hon. member represents is not aware of the fact that the government of Canada is operating, in Quebec and elsewhere, but particularly in Quebec, under federal-provincial agreements signed with the Quebec Premier in 1988. So, we consider this agency, department or whatever only as a framework already agreed to by the Quebec government in which funding is in accordance with the terms of agreements signed with the Quebec government, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

Across Canada, the rates of unemployment are shocking, just as they are in Quebec. Statistics Canada reports today that the number of Canadians receiving unemployment insurance is up significantly to 1.2 million Canadians. That does not even count the number of Canadians who are on social assistance and out of a job as a result of the policies of this government.

In light of those statistics and in light of the comments from the Bank of Nova Scotia reported today that the federal government's economic policies will prolong the economic downturn, I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister a question.

We have seen how effectively and how rapidly this government can institute damage control about events taking place in Japan when the Prime Minister makes comments on other Canadian provinces. Will the government do some damage control, get Canadians back to work and deal with the real unemployment situation?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that the slowdown was in fact predicted back in 1989. It was recognized then that there were tremendous inflationary pressures within the system that had to be checked. We wanted to do that to avoid the very horrendous kind of recession that we experienced in