

Oral Questions

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows that there are some urgent pieces of legislation before the House—

Mr. Wilson: Like the budget.

Mr. MacEachen:—including the energy security program. On March 2 we gave notice of the fiscal arrangements bill, which is greatly urgent. It is urgent because the present legislation expires at the end of March.

We have lost more than two weeks because of the strike of the official opposition.

Miss MacDonald: That is not right.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacEachen: Today we are giving first reading to that bill that has been delayed more than two weeks by reason of the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition. I regard that as urgent, more urgent than any other bill emanating from the budget, and I would proceed with that before any other particular bill.

Mr. McDermid: The budget was delivered on November 12. Where have you been?

• (1120)

TIMING OF INTRODUCTION

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, I think the minister has been around this House long enough to know that it takes two to tango. The minister has to provide some answers for us on this side of the House. He is looking for specific questions, and I will give him one. When is he going to bring in the budget legislation?

Now, before he answers that question, let me pose my supplementary.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Wilson: Today's consumer price index maintains the very wide gap of four per cent between the U.S. and Canadian inflation rates. That shows that Canadian industry is becoming more and more uncompetitive, resulting last year in a \$23 billion capital outflow through the trade deficit.

Some hon. Members: Order, order!

Mr. Wilson: And 200,000 jobs have been exported to the United States.

Some hon. Members: Order, order!

Mr. Wilson: I would ask the minister when is he going to start to deal with that problem of an outflow of capital as a result of the trade deficit. And don't forget the first question I asked.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has asked when am I going to bring in budget legislation. I gather that he understands that the fiscal arrangements bill emanates from the budget.

Mr. Wilson: The tax legislation?

Mr. MacEachen: Government policy on fiscal arrangements was laid out in the budget, and the budget bill will be given first reading today. I hope hon. members opposite will give it speedy passage so that the current legislation will not expire and equalization payments to the provinces will not terminate because of the strike the opposition perpetrated on the House of Commons for more than two weeks.

An hon. Member: With pay.

Mr. MacEachen: The Ways and Means motions, Madam Speaker, emanating from the budget are known to the hon. member; a draft bill will be presented as soon as possible.

Mr. Wilson: When?

Mr. MacEachen: Not soon; as soon as possible. Not within the next month. When it comes forward—

Mr. Wilson: Not within the next month?

An hon. Member: What, next year?

Mr. MacEachen: Madam Speaker, we are proceeding in the normal way.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacEachen: The budget draft legislation will be presented and hon. members will have ample opportunity to deal with it, but in the meantime they ought to deal with the urgent legislation we have before the House and not ask for those items which will come later.

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THE ECONOMY

INCREASE IN COST OF LIVING INDEX

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, the minister is positively twitchy. The Canadian people would like to see him on a permanent strike to give them some relief.

Cost of living figures, Madam Speaker, show that over the last year there has been an increase of 11.6 per cent, and that the higher costs are in food, housing and clothing, right where the ordinary person gets it in the neck.

There are three million Canadians living in poverty; they are the people who have been undermined, the 639,000 families and 826,000 single people. When is the minister going to try a new tack? His budget has not brought down the cost of living. The budget came down four months ago and the cost of living