

Oral Questions

[English]

ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM

EFFECT OF PROGRAM ON COLLECTIVE BARGAINING—
GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. During the 1974 election he indicated to the people of Canada that controls were not needed and would not work. Be that as it may, in respect of the flip-flop the minister is reported as stating that the guidelines have introduced an element of uncertainty as to the final outcome of bargaining but they are not proving to be the death warrant, a kind of midnight executioner, for collective bargaining. There can be no doubt about the uncertainty. I should like to ask the minister what steps the government will propose or what steps he has recommended to remove this uncertainty from the collective bargaining process, save and except the removal of the controls, which of course is the answer in the long run.

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I really do not recall the words the hon. member is attributing to me. I would be quite prepared to have him give me the source so I could check on it, but it is unfamiliar to me.

Mr. Alexander: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I am so accustomed to speaking to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration that I made an error. I meant my remarks to be directed to the Minister of Labour. I am sure he heard it, but perhaps he would like me to repeat the question.

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Repeat it, please.

Mr. Alexander: In light of the fact that the minister was so concerned about wage and price controls during the 1974 election when he indicated they would not work and were not needed, then all of a sudden he flip-flopped and now says they will work and are needed, may I refer him to his own statement when he said:

The guidelines have introduced an element of uncertainty as to the final outcome of bargaining but they are not proving to be the death warrant, a kind of midnight executioner, for collective bargaining.

There is no question about the fact that controls have brought about uncertainty. I wish to ask the minister what steps will be taken by the government or what has the minister recommended to ensure that this uncertainty is removed, keeping in mind that the removal of controls would of course be the ideal answer but that will have to wait for the future?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): I believe the hon. member is referring to a speech I gave to the United Steel Workers at Whitehorse on Friday. What I was referring to, if he wants to read the full speech and not just take a paragraph or two which might be out of context, is the fact that when the Anti-Inflation Board injects itself into the process as the law requires, it creates uncertainty so far as the employees are concerned as to what the final award will be, and that is one of the inevitabilities of the legislation in any control system.

[Mr. Trudeau.]

Mr. Alexander: In other words, the minister is stating that it will be a tough year.

* * *

FINANCE

POSSIBILITY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH LABOUR ON BUDGET
PROPOSALS

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Finance. As I understand it, the Minister of Finance stated today that he looked forward to advice in preparing his budget which is expected within the next two months. In order to keep this multilateral discussion going, would the minister advise the House whether any arrangements have been made to hold extensive talks with labour and other groups on fiscal proposals in that budget and, if so, what are they?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, what I said this morning in response to CLC's comments on economic and fiscal policy was that I disagreed with the trend of their recommendations which would seem to call for a tighter and more restrictive fiscal policy because of the risk of additional unemployment in Canada. I called on them to rethink their approach to the fiscal and monetary policy and reminded them of the fact that I would be presenting a budget within the next two months and that if they along with others had comments they wished to make, they would be most willingly received. I am glad to repeat that here. Of course, I am receiving from various interest groups across the country recommendations with regard to individual tax changes, but I would be glad to hear from the opposition, the CLC and others their views on the fiscal and monetary policy which they think is appropriate.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

EGGS—ALLEGATION IMPORTERS MAKING EXCESSIVE
PROFITS

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. In view of the fact the Minister of Agriculture stated in the House on Friday that if he were in Russia he would be given a medal for producing commodities in the very efficient manner in which they are produced here,—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Towers: —would the minister immediately stop patting himself on the back and presenting medals to himself and investigate the charges that importers of eggs into Canada are making excess profits at the expense of producers as well as consumers?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, this matter has been under investigation for some time and recommendations have been submitted to me by