

Oral Questions

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I am reasonably certain that the policy attributed to my predecessor is not precisely what the hon. member said it was. If he is asking whether our strategy is to ensure that there is maximum employment in Canada as well as the upgrading of our natural resources to the maximum degree that is practical and reasonable, then certainly the answer is that that is the policy I will be pursuing, not only in connection with the European Economic Community but also with other parts of the world.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**UNEMPLOYMENT—RESULTS FROM DIFFERENT METHOD OF CALCULATION**

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of two ministers who might answer this question more appropriately, may I direct to the Minister of Finance a question concerning the labour force information that was released today. First of all, I would ask the Minister of Finance whether it is the case that, if the same methodology were used to ascertain the unemployment levels for January of this year as was used for the preceding December and January of 1975, instead of showing a percentage drop in unemployment for last month the figures would have shown a percentage increase, both in comparison with the month before and, even more significantly, on a seasonally adjusted basis, over January, 1975?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is no. While there would not in fact have been the actual drop that appeared, there would probably have been no change upward in the former detailed figures. Of course, it remains speculative because the questions asked in the former survey were not asked. New questions were asked in this particular survey, so that is something that cannot be determined. From month to month I would have to say that there has been no change in the general level of unemployment in Canada.

UNEMPLOYMENT—INCLUSION OF FARMERS' WIVES IN STATISTICS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Well, Mr. Speaker, our calculations for both periods are different from those of the government. My supplementary question is related again to the reclassification. Is it the government's view that the percentage drop in the number of unemployed women is substantially due to the redefinition of "farmers' wives", who have been included for the first time in the survey? If that is the case, I should also like to ask the government, if now that it has been decided to include farmers' wives as part of the labour market, whether the government plans to take related steps in regard to equality so as to ensure that farmers' wives are actually entitled to part of farmers' incomes?

● (1420)

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think it is fair to observe at this point that this

is a technical revision of the unemployment figures started three years ago and carried out by the relevant agencies of the government, among other things so as to base these figures on 1971 census data instead of 1961 census data. With regard to the inclusion, there has been a change in the nature of the questions asked so as to better determine who is actively seeking employment. As to the hon. member saying his figures are different from those of the government, I assume he has made a survey of 55,000 households as has Statistics Canada.

UNEMPLOYMENT—EXCLUSION OF SEASONALLY EMPLOYED WORKERS FROM STATISTICS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, the minister is normally very courteous and accurate in his observations, but he failed to answer the question in respect of whether women were going to be entitled to part of the farm income. Maybe he will pick that up in response to my third question. My third question concerns the decision to exclude or change the categorization of seasonally employed workers so that they do not show up in the same way in the unemployment figures.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Broadbent: The question I put to the minister is, since the vast majority of seasonally employed in Canada would in fact prefer to be employed all year round, but because there are not jobs available all year round they cannot be, will the minister explain the justification for this change in methodology? Is it not entirely inappropriate to categorize people who would prefer to be employed all year round in such a way that they do not even show up now in the unemployment statistics?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, to deal with the ultimate question of the hon. gentleman in the previous series of questions, the answer would be, of course, this government has been taking the lead within Canada in making certain that the principles of International Women's Year will be carried forward hereafter.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): With regard to the question about seasonal workers, of course, the critical factor is whether someone is actually in the work force or is actually seeking work. The questions that have been proposed by the Chief Statistician are for the purpose of elucidating a sample on that basis. I might just say again that there have been a number of technical changes which commended themselves to the Chief Statistician and others. Perhaps the hon. gentleman and his colleagues would like to examine the Chief Statistician and others responsible when the estimates come before the House.