

come clean and tell the House what he thinks the interest rate should really be?

Mr. MacEachen: Madam Speaker, I have no hesitation in saying that I regard the present interest rates as being too high; that is obvious.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: They are too high in terms of the requirements for restraining inflation in Canada at the present time. That is my view. In order to maintain the monetary targets, an interest rate of the dimensions the hon. member mentioned is obviously too high.

● (1450)

The hon. member has asked what precise rate I have in mind. I do not intend to answer questions which even the governor of the Bank of Canada, with all his expertise, would find impossible to answer.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): You are the Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacEachen: But I am quite ready to tell the hon. member that I regard the present rates as too high, and that they are caused by the situation which I have described so frequently but which hon. members want to ignore in all their questions. Hon. members have not dealt with that issue at all, nor have they presented any alternatives.

Mr. Rae: Come before the committee and we will talk about it.

Mr. MacEachen: They have just carried on with the old rhetoric from the February election.

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RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

REQUEST FOR INCREASED FUNDING

Mr. W. Kenneth Robison (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Science and Technology. In view of the fact that before 1995 a large fraction of present Canadian independent researchers will be retiring and there will be an increased demand for technical and scientific personnel in industry during the period that the private sector is attempting, through modernization and increased productivity, to recover from the current recession; and furthermore, since there will be an increased demand for personnel—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Robison (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): —resulting from the increase in over-all research and development expenditures—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Oral Questions

Mr. Robison (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I will be short, but after listening to the preambles of hon. members opposite—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the hon. member please proceed to his question without further preamble. The preamble has been long enough.

Mr. Robison (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Due to demand in research and development predicted by the Government of Canada, will the minister—

An hon. Member: Question.

Mr. Robison (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Surely I can receive some courtesy from hon. members.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The Speaker will maintain order. The hon. member need not reply to these interjections. I will try to maintain order, and it would be easier if the hon. member went straight to his question.

Mr. Robison (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Will the minister advise the House whether he would consider increasing the government's support for research and development, which is presently at only .9 per cent of the gross national product, to 1.5 per cent now, rather than wait until 1985 for this increase?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of State for Science and Technology and Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, I had some difficulty hearing the hon. member's question. I believe he was asking whether the government had plans for increasing its support for research and development. That is indeed the case. We have considerably increased the funds made available for this fiscal year, and we intend to increase the government's effort so that we will reach as quickly as possible the objective of 1.5 per cent of Canada's gross national product.

Although I did have some difficulty hearing the hon. member, I believe he referred to the figure of .9 per cent. I should make it clear that that figure refers not to the government's effort but to the total, over-all effort in the economy. It is our intention to move as quickly as possible to a point where the government is spending roughly one-half of 1 per cent of the gross national product on this effort in the hopes that the private sector and the provinces will come forward and meet the other 1 per cent, so that we may reach the over-all commitment of 1.5 per cent by the mid-1980s. I hope to make a much clearer statement on this matter some time in January.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

REQUEST FOR MEASURES TO PROTECT LOW-INCOME CANADIANS

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance, whose responses today to the plight of the poor have been, not only evasive, but downright heartless. The minister knows full well