

Oral Questions

Why did the Prime Minister promise while in Hong Kong that Canada could take in more refugees when the fact is that the budget for settling refugees in Canada has been cut by 20 per cent?

Does the Prime Minister not realize that it is cruel to raise the hopes of people who have neither a home nor a country, just to use them for a photo opportunity?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the record of Canada in terms of immigration and in terms of welcoming refugees to Canada is more than a photo opportunity.

The hon. member should remember and look at the figures because he presided, with his colleagues, over a government that was welcoming people into Canada at the rate of maybe 70,000 people a year a few years ago.

This government increased our commitment to immigrants and we now welcome to Canada over 200,000 people a year, and that is a record that the hon. member should recognize.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, after what happened in Hong Kong and Japan, will the Acting Prime Minister send an urgent telegram to the Prime Minister and ask him to make a real contribution to Canada's reputation abroad—by coming home right now?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, that is a suggestion similar to that which the hon. Leader of the Opposition made when we sent our troops to the Persian Gulf to fight a war. He said: "Bring them home". We did not do it then and we will not do it now.

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[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Last Sunday, more than 5,000 Canadians in the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands gathered to make themselves heard and demand that the government put an end to the depressed state of the economy in their region. According to Statistics Canada, the unemployment rate in the area is over 27 per cent. When will the government table economic policies that will give some hope and create

employment for these people who want to stay in their region? When?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, my answer will be very short. I would ask the hon. member to listen carefully to what people say after my visit to the Gaspé Thursday morning.

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, we are very anxious to hear what the minister has to say. However, considering his record since 1984, I don't think there is much hope.

The Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands rank second among the regions in Canada with the highest unemployment rates. So again, my question is: When will the government introduce policies to deal with this? We don't care about the minister's photo opportunities. We want concrete measures. When are we going to create durable jobs in this region, the most beautiful region in this country?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, again, I would ask the hon. member to listen carefully to what we say on Thursday to the people of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands. I met these people 8 months ago. They made some proposals, and I intend to give them an answer on Thursday. The hon. member will see how we deal with problems. That part of the country was just as beautiful in 1984, and we know how you dealt with the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands at the time.

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[*English*]

TRADE

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. We have all been witnessing on television today the clumsy attempt at damage control. What Tom d'Aquino said yesterday the embassy officials are getting him to deny today. What Mr. Nukazawa said yesterday they are giving him the script to deny today. Having bad-mouthed Ontario on this touted mission to increase trade and development in Canada, having misread the collective minds of Japanese businessmen, and having behaved as a narrow political partisan, and having blamed the journalists for his negative comments about Ontario, are the Prime Minister and this government now prepared to apologize first of all to his hosts for misreading the minds of Japanese