

Oral Questions

stated publicly that the Mackenzie Valley pipeline would not be proceeded with until native land claims were settled. A few weeks ago the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said in Toronto that the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline would be proceeded with if approved by the National Energy Board, whether or not the native land claims were settled. I want to ask the Prime Minister what is the government's policy. Does the government intend to proceed with the Mackenzie Valley pipeline construction if recommended by the NEB, irrespective of whether or not the land claims have been settled?

● (1120)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): The government's position has been that we would not want to make a decision on this matter either as between one pipeline or the other or no pipeline until we have the report from NEB and from the Berger commission. We expect both these to come in within the first half of the year, and that would permit the government to make a decision at that point. I hope that the land claims, to the extent that they might be affected by the decision, will have been settled, but the undertaking is not to make a decision until the reports are made.

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[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

REQUEST FOR INQUIRY INTO ALLEGED INJUSTICE SUFFERED BY BENEFICIARY

Mr. C. A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration.

It is about a beneficiary from whom the Unemployment Insurance Commission claimed back excess benefit payments. He could not reimburse them because he was out of work, so UIC officials had him arrested and he actually spent one month and a half in jail. Could the minister launch an inquiry into a case like that and could he tell us if the UIC office has the right again to seek payment by holding back the benefits they owe him today?

[English]

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would be surprised if it was the result of not being able to pay. It may be in that particular case there had been some fraud. In any event, without prejudging the case I will look into the question that was raised if the hon. member will give me the name of the individual.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF GENERAL JAMES DEXTRAZE AND VICE-ADMIRAL ROBERT FALLS

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Before recognizing another hon. member, I know all hon. members would want to join me in signalling the presence in our gallery of two very distinguished

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

visitors, first in the person of our present chief of defence staff, and second, his successor as of this coming September. I refer to General James Dextraze, Canadian Chief of Defence Staff, and his successor, the first naval officer to achieve such a position, Vice-Admiral Robert Falls.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

UNEMPLOYMENT IN QUEBEC—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO STIMULATE ECONOMY OF THE PROVINCE

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. As the former chairman of the Economic Council of Canada, Mr. Raynaud, a Liberal MNA in Quebec, has predicted that the economic situation in Quebec will deteriorate even further in 1977, that the unemployment rate may exceed 12 per cent, and inflation will rebound to more than 8 per cent, would the Prime Minister, bearing in mind that the federal government is charged with the responsibility of maintaining a stable economy throughout the whole country, tell the House what specific steps he will take to arrest this continuing deterioration in the economy of Quebec, particularly when noting that the economy there has been faltering under his government for many years and unemployment has risen from 6.6 per cent just before he took office in 1968 to the present 9.8 per cent?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to apply our economic policies with impartiality in all parts of the country. In those parts where unemployment is higher we will seek to have special measures, and the budget may be the occasion to mention some more.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, bearing in mind that the Minister of Finance stated yesterday that his policies of carefully staged recovery had put the Canadian economy on the right track, would the Prime Minister tell the House whether he considers nearly one million unemployed to be a sign that the economy is on the right track, whether he considers negative economic growth in the last quarter of 1976 to be a sign that the economy is on the right track or whether he considers a record trade deficit in the last quarter and accelerating inflation to be signs that the economy is on the right track, and if so, would he indicate what he would regard as the wrong track?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I do not happen to have in front of me the rule in Beauchesne which talks about argumentative questions, but I am sure that this is one of those questions.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

LOSS OF INTERNATIONAL CONFIDENCE IN CANADIAN ECONOMY—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Noting that the widely read international publication *Business Week* has stated that the Canadian economy is in serious difficulty and