

Madam Speaker: Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister. This government insists on closing down Parliament because it says it needs more time, more than a month, to write a new throne speech. This is a desperate attempt to put a fresh face on its tired and failed old policies.

Surely the government does not need another month to know that it has a very serious and crucial economic problem, and it is that there are more than 1.4 million people looking for work in this country.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister give us a commitment today that the new throne speech will contain an immediate program of full employment so that there will be at least a glimmer of hope for the more than 1.4 million Canadians who are out of work due to the discredited economic policies of this failed and tired old government.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the context of the hon. member's question. It was my understanding that in the negotiations among House leaders, there was a genuine desire, after the passage of the resolution that would incorporate new rules in the House, there would be a period of time when we could get ready for the new session of Parliament.

It is quite normal to have more than one session in any Parliament. It has been the decision of the government to come forward with a Speech from the Throne which will reflect some of the concerns that affect the nation with regard to national unity, economic opportunities and the continuation of the good policies that have built a stronger Canada.

The hon. member will recognize that the figures this month indicate that for the first time in five months, there has been a net increase in total jobs created in this country. I think that is a positive sign.

Oral Questions

There should be no surprise about the fact that we were going to go through this bit of a downturn. It was clearly indicated in the budget speech presented by the Minister of Finance. We expect a turnaround to occur in the second half as the Minister of Finance predicted. In his seven years as Minister of Finance, his predictions have always come true to form.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister talks of a bit of a downturn. Why does he not admit, as the Minister of Finance was finally forced to admit, that we are in a desperate and serious recession caused by this government's economic policies.

[Translation]

Madam Speaker, the tragic situation workers find themselves in nation-wide does not seem to be taking a turn for the better.

In Trois-Rivières, the unemployment rate is 16 per cent. That means 9,000 people out of work.

In Sherbrooke, there are 8,000 jobless people, and another 8,000 in the Chicoutimi area.

So, I would like to ask the acting Prime Minister this: Can he reassure the Canadian people and promise them today that the throne speech will contain full employment policies which will have an immediate impact?

Why does he not give a little hope to the Canadian people who are unemployed because of old and tired policies? Can he give us a positive answer today for the benefit of the jobless?

• (1120)

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the old and tired policies are the policies that are advocated by the hon. member. They are policies which are throw-backs to the past which simply did not work when he was in government. We are not going to go back to that type of policy.

I remind him of the fact that under his policies back in the early 1980s, we had 14 per cent unemployment, we had 22 per cent interest rates and we had a disastrous recession in 1981-82.

What we have now is a set of policies that are designed to get us out of the recession that we are in today. They are designed to get interest rates down. We are seeing some signs of recovery in that. I need only remind the hon. member of what has happened in the housing