

Oral Questions

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for this motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

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AGRICULTURE

SUGGESTION THAT MINISTER APPEAR BEFORE STANDING COMMITTEE—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Alex Patterson (Fraser Valley East): Madam Speaker, since the government has failed miserably to assist the agricultural community to survive the impact of unconscionably high interest rates, and bankruptcies, seizures and foreclosures are taking place at an alarming rate and in a seemingly arbitrary and intensive manner. I therefore move, seconded by the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers):

● (1415)

That the Minister of Agriculture appear before the Standing Committee on Agriculture to explain to the members specifically what action the government proposes to assist those who are facing seizures and foreclosures.

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for this motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

LABOUR CONDITIONS

INCREASE IN RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, I would like to get the attention of the Minister of Employment and Immigration, who is kneeling in the aisle.

Mr. Nowlan: He should kneel.

Mr. Hawkes: The minister will know that in the month of September Canada experienced the largest one-month jump in the unemployment rate in the entire history of this nation. When questioned about that fact on October 14, the Minister of Finance indicated that he was surprised and suggested that this might be an aberration or a sampling error. This weekend the Minister of Employment and Immigration indicated that he could see the softening all summer. Could the minister tell us what he saw that the Minister of Finance did not see throughout the summer, what he said to the Minister of Finance, and what the Minister of Finance responded?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, just so that the record is clear, I would like to point out to the hon. member that the unemployment figures as they relate to this last month should not be seen in isolation but in the context of the figures over the past year and in the future. In that respect I would point out that in the last 13 months there was unprecedented growth in employment in this country. Therefore, we have to take a very careful look at the figures for this past month and compare them with future figures before we make any precipitous judgments about the patterns we face in the employment field. I think it is very important that we deal with this subject very carefully and not be stampeded into a wild panic, which is what the hon. member is obviously trying to do.

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THE ECONOMY

FIGURES RELATING TO GROWTH

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, I accept the minister's invitation to compare some figures, and I would like to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Finance. On that same date, October 14, the Prime Minister stood in the House and, in response to a question from the Leader of the Official Opposition, indicated that real growth in the Canadian economy in the first nine months was 6.3 per cent. Today we have figures from Statistics Canada which indicate that in the first eight months growth was one tenth of 1 per cent. The Prime Minister inflated the figure 63 times.

Could the Minister of Finance stand and, first, repudiate the Prime Minister's figures and, second, indicate to us why, when the figures in July and August indicated that real domestic product was going down and not up, he was surprised by the increase in unemployment in September? Could he tell us why that surprised him, when he is supposed to know that the economy is going backwards and not forwards?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the question is quite argumentative. It does not ask for any information. It simply makes a series of argumentative comments. If the hon. member wants to ask a question, I would be glad to try to answer it.

Mr. Hawkes: Madam Speaker, I asked the minister if he would give the House the real figures instead of the ones the Prime Minister gave us. However, the figures today from Statistics Canada indicate that I am right, and they are there for everybody to see.

MEASURES TO REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, I wish to return to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. I am wondering whether the image the Minister of Employment and Immigration had in his mind over the summer was really a