

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

LABOUR CONDITIONS

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT BLAMED FOR INCREASE IN VIOLENT CRIME

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Economic Development. I am sure the Minister is aware of the concerns expressed over the weekend by Mr. Phil Givens, the Chairman of the Toronto Metropolitan Police Commission, relating to the substantial increase in violent crime. Mr. Givens stated that the bitterness, anguish and suffering of unemployed youth are the number one reason for this sharp increase in violent crime. First, does the Minister agree with Mr. Givens's comments? Second, what is the Government doing to address this problem?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Minister of State for Economic Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Madam Speaker, I am not entirely clear why the question on violent crime in Toronto is addressed to me as Minister of State for Economic Development.

Mr. Epp: He just gave you the reason.

Mr. Johnston: I have not considered the comments of that gentleman.

I would not at this point want to go through the numerous measures which the Government has taken to deal with the problem of youth unemployment, in particular, unless the House would wish me to do so. The former two Ministers of Employment and Immigration have addressed this problem, and we are continuing to address it. It remains a major priority of this Government, as the Hon. Member knows. However, it seems to me that there may be a lot of reasons why there are problems of violent crime in Toronto and other urban areas, not only in Canada but in the United States and elsewhere around the world, other than this particular issue of youth unemployment.

Mr. Wilson: Madam Speaker, I addressed the question to the Minister because the Minister of Employment and Immigration was not in the House. I thought the Minister of State for Economic Development would have some interest in youth unemployment.

INTRODUCTION OF JOB-CREATION POLICIES

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, all we have heard from the Minister of Employment and Immigration are his statements about some phantom policies which he is going to bring in with the Throne Speech. Would the Minister explain to this House why these policies cannot be brought into effect right now when the problem is so severe, rather than wait for some indefinite time in the future when a Speech from the Throne will be brought down?

Oral Questions

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Minister of State for Economic Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Madam Speaker, I believe that is a repetition of a question which was addressed last week to the responsible Minister. The Hon. Member is fully aware of the programs which are in effect. Never in the history of this country has so much money been devoted to job creation as has been devoted by this Government.

Mr. McDermid: There have never been so many unemployed, either.

Mr. Johnston: We still recognize, and will continue to recognize, as the Minister said in this House last week, that youth unemployment is a major priority of this Government, and will continue to be so. This problem has been addressed, is being addressed, and will continue to be addressed.

Mr. Wilson: Madam Speaker, the Minister knows that the policies which have been set out apply to 31,000 youth, or 6 per cent of the unemployment problem. That is not action.

IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PREMIUMS ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Last week in the House, Madam Speaker, I made reference to a long term problem and to something which could create longer term jobs for our youth when I referred to what the Canadian Federation of Independent Business was saying, to the effect that the unemployment insurance program is far broader than just an insurance program, that it is a social program. Yet it is still funded by a payroll tax which hits small business far harder than large business, and inhibits the creation of permanent youth jobs.

Mr. Rossi: Question.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister agree that a further increase in unemployment insurance premiums will aggravate this problem of youth unemployment?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Minister of State for Economic Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Madam Speaker, I am happy to take notice of questions which are being put by the Hon. Member and to address the questions which seem to be puzzling him. The whole issue of unemployment insurance has been under review for many years. It has been modified. The Act has been updated. It is obviously a program which has to be revised constantly, fine tuned, and designed to meet the circumstances of the day. However, surely everyone in this House, in fact everyone in Canada, will have to admit that the program has served this country very well indeed during one of the most difficult periods the country has ever faced, the worst depression since the 1930s.