

*Oral Questions*

● (1425)

[English]

## POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, let me direct my supplementary to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister know anything about Canagrex? Does the Prime Minister know that his Government imposed closure on it? Does the Prime Minister intend to reject the advice of the Auditor General regarding the abuses of Crown corporations generally, or does he intend to reject that advice simply in the case of Canagrex?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, I apologize to the House. I did arrive late. I was having lunch with the spiritual leaders of the country who wanted to debate the question of nuclear disarmament. On the way back I was told that the Leader of the Opposition had sent a letter to my office at 12.45, at which time I was already engaged in the meeting. Therefore, I have not had time to read the letter. However, I understand from the debate which has begun that the objection is more to the notice of closure than to the substance of the debate.

I understand that timing has been discussed over a long period as to how we can reasonably bring this debate to a democratic end by having a vote on it. There have been more than 86 hours in the House and in Committee given to the debate on this subject. I think any reasonable kind of person in a democratic meeting, and this is the case here, would be able to reach some firm agreement as to a reasonable amount of time after which the debate would be brought to an end. I do not think there is anything dictatorial in hoping that a democratic assembly will make up its mind on the time for debate and on the results of that debate. That is what we are asking the Opposition.

In so far as the question of the Leader of the Opposition on Crown corporations is concerned, I do not think that even he or his Party would think that the Auditor General was advocating the abolition or non-use of all Crown corporations, because then we could begin with Air Canada, CNR, and so on. Therefore, the question of Crown corporations and its relevance to the Auditor General's report is whether this Crown corporation will be properly controlled. That is the purpose of the debate before the House. It is on that we want the Opposition to express its views and to vote.

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## THE ECONOMY

## REQUEST FOR CONVENING OF FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

**Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Yesterday in the House the Minister of Finance, in reply to a question from the New Democratic Party, indicated that there ought to be a major co-ordination between the federal and provincial Governments to come to grips with the alarming level of unemployment in the

country. Yesterday, at the same time the Minister was speaking here, the Maritime Premiers were meeting elsewhere, expressing the same desire for a co-ordinated effort between the federal and provincial Governments on the economy, but noting that the Prime Minister, not having agreed to a First Ministers' conference on this subject, they remain skeptical about the seriousness of the federal Government on it.

Considering that the Minister of Finance has said we need a major co-ordinated effort and, as everyone knows, unemployment is now at a disastrous level, will the Prime Minister state his agreement in principle and make it clear to the Maritime Premiers that he would like to have a First Ministers' meeting on the economy?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, I would like to suggest to the Leader of the New Democratic Party that his question is very oddly timed. He is asking that question just two days before the federal Minister of Finance meets with all his opposite numbers from the Provinces, precisely to discuss ways of implementing that co-ordinated effort which we certainly want and which we suspect the Provinces want, and they will be attending that meeting. I would suggest to the Leader of the New Democratic Party that he put more faith in the provincial Ministers of Finance, who are coming precisely to discuss co-ordinated efforts, than the other Ministers of the Provinces who do not seem to know about that meeting.

● (1430)

## REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER AGREE TO MEET PREMIERS

**Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** Madam Speaker, it is not a question of faith in the provincial representatives on this issue. Up to this point, and specifically concerning the Prime Minister, it is a question of faith in the Government.

I would like to say in all seriousness to the Prime Minister that one of the advantages of a commitment by the Prime Minister now, instead of standing back and waiting to have such a conference, would be that the Finance Ministers when they meet could act on that assumption, sort out certain basic questions which ought to be faced by the First Ministers, and the First Ministers could then meet, presumably early in the new year, if it is not resolved before. Therefore, I would like to ask the Prime Minister once again, will he not commit himself in principle to the necessity of meeting on this fundamental question of unemployment with the other Premiers of the country?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, I cannot speak for the Finance Ministers of the Provinces, but our Finance Minister has been part of the Government for more than ten years and throughout the seventies we have had a greater number of federal-provincial First Ministers' meetings than in any other period in our history. There have been dozens of such meetings, Madam Speaker, since I have been Prime Minister, as many, I think, as have been had, perhaps in the previous 25 or 50 years. The assumption is that we are always anxious to have federal-