

Oral Questions

and get on with an investigation so that this repugnant practice can be put to an end?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as I said to the Hon. Member yesterday, Immigration management has not been apprised of any of the details. If he has details of these practices which we have said are abhorrent, I wish he or anyone else would provide them to me. We will see that action is taken.

REQUEST FOR MINISTERIAL GUARANTEES

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, since her own Ontario Regional Director has refused to deny the reports, will she categorically tell the House that this repugnant practice is not happening? Can she give us that guarantee?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Hon. Member that directions have been placed everywhere not to allow in any way practices such as that to exist. If I find evidence to the contrary, we will certainly take steps to stop them. However, I need to have definite information in order to do that.

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THE BUDGET

GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT GROWTH FORECASTS

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Why did he project his Budget consideration to 1991 on the basis of 2.75 per cent growth in the GNP when most economic forecasters are projecting a 3 per cent growth? You see, Don, that is how you ask a question.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I thought there was a familiar ring to that question. In fact I think most people will find that the economic assumptions that are used in the Budget are quite conservative.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An Hon. Member: You are right.

● (1500)

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): With the result, I think, that the confidence and the credibility which people have in the numbers are well founded because we have based these assumptions looking at—

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Come on!

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): If the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It is three o'clock.

POINTS OF ORDER

DISALLOWANCE OF SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

Mr. John Parry (Kenora-Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order which arises out of the Question Period. I raise my point of order not to impugn the integrity of the person who rose to respond to my question, because I have every confidence in him, but because of the statement that the Minister was not in the House. My question was directed to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney). It concerned the responsibility of the Minister of State for Small Business (Mr. Bissonnette) and was with regard to the Native Economic Development Program. I would like Your Honour's ruling with respect to whether or not I was legitimately entitled to a supplementary question since an answer was given by someone who bore no responsibility for the matter raised.

Mr. Speaker: I think the Hon. Member may not realize this. When he puts a question he puts it to the Ministry.

Mr. McCurdy: No!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Hon. Members may not realize it but questions are actually put to the Government. The Government decides who will answer. If the Chair is faced with a Parliamentary Secretary indicating that the Minister who should answer the question is not present, then the Chair has no choice but to take the Hon. Member's word. Questions are directed to the Ministry, which I think is a point the Hon. Member may not realize.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I am sure Your Honour can visualize the problem which will arise if the practice pursued today were to be allowed to continue. It would then be possible for other than the Minister in charge to rise and say that the Minister is not here, even though he or she is sitting in his or her place. That is exactly what happened today. The Minister in charge of the program was sitting in his place when we were informed that he was not present. Surely to God that cannot be allowed.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will check that if the Hon. Member likes.

Mr. Deans: That was the answer.

Mr. Speaker: The answer from the Government was that the Minister in charge of responding to the question was not here. That was the answer from the Government.

Mr. Deans: It was wrong.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member cannot be suggesting, surely, that the Chair has any obligation with regard to whether or not a question or answer is relevant or irrelevant, or right or wrong. It is simply not possible for the Chair to be involved in such a discussion. I suggest that Hon. Members know that when a question is taken on notice the Chair's practice, which I think is reasonable, is to say that if that is