

Oral Questions

Mr. Crosbie:—I move, seconded by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall):

That this House supports the holding of the Canada Summer Games in St. John's, Newfoundland, during August, 1977, congratulates the committee on the preparations made for the holding of the games and urges all members of parliament to attend the games in St. John's, during August, when Newfoundland hospitality will assure them a visit not to be forgotten.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have no hesitation in recognizing the importance of the motion, its desirability and its cordial terms, but have some doubts about its urgency and pressing necessity.

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[Translation]

SPORTS**CONGRATULATIONS TO LES CANADIENS HOCKEY TEAM ON WINNING STANLEY CUP**

Mr. Jacques Lavoie (Hochelaga): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 43, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to introduce a motion dealing with an important matter of pressing necessity.

Considering that on Saturday May 14 the Canadiens won a brilliant victory and once again carried off the Stanley Cup, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro):

That congratulations be sent to the directors, coach and players for their success and for the fine way in which they contribute to the international prestige of Canada in the world of hockey where their fame is proverbial.

Mr. Speaker: Order. For exactly the same reasons stated about the previous motion, I naturally refuse to put the question to the House under Standing Order 43.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**INCREASE IN LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN ATLANTIC AREA—GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question for the Prime Minister relates to the original commitment made by this government, and repeated on occasion, with respect to the importance of eliminating regional disparities across Canada. In view of the fact that since 1970, the year after the Department of Regional Economic Expansion was created, the differential in the unemployment level between the Atlantic area and the rest of Canada has risen from 8.7 per cent to something like 55 per cent last year, in the province of Quebec 37 per cent fewer jobs have been created during that same period as compared with the rest of the country, can the Prime Minister say how seriously the government views this

[Mr. Crosbie.]

alarming growth in disparities between the five eastern provinces and the rest of the country, and, particularly, what steps are being taken to establish priorities which will substantially turn that direction around, so that these disparities may be substantially eliminated and not increased, as they have been during the past half dozen years?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the government of course views this situation with considerable concern, because many hundreds of millions of dollars have been put into the Maritimes and the eastern parts of the country in order to correct some of the traditional, structural imbalances in this country. I remind the hon. member that in the budget, as recently as one month ago, we took specific fiscal steps in order to add to our effort to correct this imbalance.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Neither the Minister of Finance nor the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion have been able to indicate even one specific job created as a result of that specific fiscal measure. I point out that the recent Ontario budget indicated a net balance of trade deficit with the Atlantic provinces of some \$1.5 billion, this indicating a loss of some 60,846 jobs from the Atlantic region. Can the Prime Minister indicate whether these figures have been studied by himself or any of his ministers? What steps are being taken generally to co-ordinate overall government policy with respect to regional disparity, or has it been just a one-shot affair under one department which is now fading into oblivion?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I feel I can presume to say these figures must already have been drawn to the attention of the ministers. Lest they have not been, I will ensure that they are.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, inasmuch as in the Speech from the Throne last fall, which I am sure the Prime Minister will recall, there was no specific reference to the need for reform of the Regional Development Incentives Act, a program which has been part and parcel of the government since 1970 and which has now been reduced in terms of budgetary funds and restricted because of its rigid structures, so much so that it has been renegotiated with three separate provinces in terms of separate development agreements, can the Prime Minister indicate if he has instructed either the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion or any other minister to develop permanent job creation programs so that the economy in these five eastern provinces can begin to function as they should?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is assuming that such steps have not already been taken. I am sure the hon. member is aware of the very, very considerable funds which have been spent in those provinces and which indeed have created jobs. The reality is that they have not created jobs at the rate we would like and we will find every other way we can to increase this rate.