

Oral Questions

● (1420)

Mr. Mulroney: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister referred to a plan that was given serious thought, so serious, in fact, that in 1980, in January and February, the unemployment rate in the area was 9.5 per cent, and has now risen to 18.4 per cent, in a highly disadvantaged area.

My question is very simple and very straightforward. Could the Prime Minister table in the House a schedule specifying the number of jobs to be created and when, when the local population will be able to benefit from the programs promised under \$250 agreement? To date, nobody, not even his dog has been hired! Table your schedule.

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is complaining that no dogs have been hired. Madam Speaker, dogs may be his priority but our priority is human beings, and we are hiring them.

Many of the projects announced are already underway, and believe me, these are not projects for cats and dogs but for human beings.

The press releases were published. If the Leader of the Opposition wants us to buy advertising space with public funds to announce what we are already doing, we shall do so. However, perhaps his research office would be better off asking the Government for the press releases we published as we were announcing the projects. Let him do his homework and study his lessons, first, before asking questions.

Hon. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary, and it is not about homework and lessons. Today, in the poll results, Canadians are reminding the Prime Minister that whatever his lessons were, their practical application has not been successful.

Madam Speaker, my question is the following. If the Government was so serious about its proposals for a recovery program for the Gaspé, why is the Prime Minister today refusing to engage in a direct dialogue with the Premier of Quebec, after acknowledging yesterday that it had not been possible to conclude a joint agreement between Quebec and Ottawa on this long-term program?

In the circumstances, should not a responsible Prime Minister promise the House today to get in touch with his Quebec counterpart, for the sake of a region that has suffered more than enough?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I wish to appeal to the Hon. Member's common sense. He referred to a dialogue with the Quebec Premier. I am constantly in touch with him. For instance, on the matter of the community funds we want to spend in the municipalities, we have been seeking ways to solve this problem, and I have been doing so personally for many months.

It is a simple matter, Madam Speaker, and perhaps the Hon. Member for Joliette could give us the benefit of his innate knowledge. We want to spend public funds to create jobs in the municipal sectors. We have been trying for months to get permission to spend those funds. Municipal councils and mayors have complained to me. I got in touch with the Premier of Quebec, and we are trying to find a formula under which, as I said before, we will be able to spend public funds in Quebec municipalities.

If the Hon. Member believes he has a magic solution, let him call up the Premier of Quebec and tell him what it is. As far as accusing me of not having a dialogue with the Premier... Madam Speaker, I have been trying to find a solution.

The Hon. Member knows how stubborn and unpredictable the péquiste government is. It does not like co-operating with the federal Government.

Why are the Hon. Member and his leader hiding behind an ideology I know they do not support, to blame me for not co-operating with a government that wants the province to separate from Canada?

Mr. La Salle: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister was talking about co-operation with the provinces, but if I recall correctly, he himself repeated not long ago that as far as he was concerned, co-operative federalism was dead, and now he is complaining about a lack of co-operation on the part of the provinces! My question is as follows: If the Prime Minister wants a solution, I would ask him to inform the House, whether in the circumstances, he feels co-operative federalism is really dead. If so, then why is he trying to mislead people by referring to genuine co-operation and consultation with the provincial premiers?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I would not be surprised if the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party did not know the answer to this question, since he is a newcomer on the political scene, but the member for Joliette ought to know—unless he is asking questions for the sake of indulging in rhetoric—that the kind of co-operative federalism I criticized consists in the federal Government giving funds to various provincial governments to spend, while they get all the credit. That is exactly what is happening in the case of the municipalities I referred to earlier.

Mr. La Salle: That is not federal business, and you had better reach an agreement with Quebec!

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I wish the Hon. Member would listen. We have public funds, we want to create jobs, we want to spend those funds to create jobs through community projects which, for the most part, do not come under the direct jurisdiction of the municipalities but are initiated by individuals or groups that apply for funds. The Government of Quebec is saying: Give us the money, we are going to spend it. That is