

Oral Questions

of the Liberal Government of Quebec, and a very distinguished member of that Government. Yesterday the Minister produced a statement in which he indicated that the Government will reflect upon some of the recommendations and will provide a global response to them at or about May 15. I think it is reasonable in the circumstances that we hear from opposition Parties and others in the country.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Perhaps the Prime Minister could tell us how coherent his Party is on the issue of capital punishment and what he will do about that.

Mr. Forrestall: What are you going to do about it?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Our position is quite clear.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): What is it?

An Hon. Member: Let's hear it.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): When will the Prime Minister respond to the efforts of some of his ministerial ranks to fulfil a commitment he made to the Canadian people? But that is another matter.

[Translation]

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT REIMBURSE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE FUND

Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): I have another question for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Apparently that report cost \$6 million, and the bill has been charged to the Unemployment Insurance Fund. Is the Government going to reimburse the Unemployment Insurance Commission to compensate the people who, after all, contributed to the Fund?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I thought the Leader of the Official Opposition would be better informed. I am sorry, but the Commission cost \$5.2 million. I hope that figure is now official. It was yesterday, and I hope that all Opposition Members on the New Democratic side will stop referring to \$8 million. The figure is \$5.2 million.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, there comes a time when an agency or a company decides it might be useful to reassess its internal operations in order to improve its efficiency. Generally, such companies fund these studies and assessments from their own resources. That is why, and we had the authorization of Treasury Board, we felt that unemployment insurance funds should be used to pay for a study that would improve the service given by the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

[English]

ANNUALIZED CALCULATION OF BENEFITS—REQUEST THAT MINISTER REJECT RECOMMENDATION

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Yesterday the Minister stated in the House, as reported at page 1753 of *Hansard*:

—our purpose is not to reduce federal contributions to the unemployed.

The Minister of Transport said something similar outside the House. If that is the case, why does the Minister not immediately reject recommendation 23, the annualization method of calculating benefits, which will in fact reduce payments to the unemployed, especially those unemployed who do not have skills and who have great difficulty in finding work? Why does he not reject that recommendation immediately and be consistent with what he said in the House?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House, I also told the Hon. Member that the Government intended to make a serious study of the unemployment insurance system. Of course, the Liberal Party has a knack of examining reports within a day and a half and drawing their own conclusions from a report that took a year and a half to complete. We shall see what those conclusions are.

As far as we are concerned, we are keeping an open mind and neither rejecting nor accepting any recommendations for the time being. We are going to consider them within the general context of the assessment of the system and we shall retain what is good and drop what is not. And after doing so, on May 15 we intend to present conclusions that will reflect the Government's position.

[English]

REQUEST FOR FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, we therefore cannot believe what the Minister said in the House yesterday. Since the Forget proposals have very serious implications for the provinces because they would transfer thousands of unemployed to provincial welfare rolls, what plans does the Minister have for meeting with the provinces? Does he intend to have a federal-provincial conference on this matter before May 15 so that the provinces can have real input on something that will hurt them very seriously?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member knows perfectly well that we have an excellent relationship with the provinces. I will be meeting with my provincial counterparts in January 1987, when the discussion will of course centre on unemployment insurance. At this meeting we expect to hear the views of the provinces, to make better progress on this issue, and to meet the expectations of the provinces as well as we can.