

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ENGLISH AND FRENCH TEXTS OF STATEMENT OF CONCLUSIONS

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I regret the absence of the Prime Minister because I think this question should be directed to him. However, I will direct it to the Acting Prime Minister and perhaps we can get a satisfactory explanation. On Wednesday the Prime Minister tabled the text of the communiqué of the federal-provincial conference. There appears in the English and French texts what seems to me to be an irreconcilable difference in the use of language. I refer to page 10 of the French text and page 9 of the English text. Is the Acting Prime Minister able to explain to the House how the English phrase "expressed its sympathy" is equivalent to the French phrase "se déclare en accord"? What steps are going to be taken to reconcile this difference?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member has said, this is a question which ought to be directed to the Prime Minister rather than the Acting Prime Minister since I was not present and presiding at the meetings of the constitutional conference. However, I will direct this question to the Prime Minister and I am sure he will be glad to provide an explanation.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, would the Acting Prime Minister also direct this question to the attention of the Prime Minister? What steps have been taken in direct or indirect contact with the premier of the province of Quebec who apparently relies fully on the French text as expressing what happened at that conference?

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

UNEMPLOYMENT—ESTIMATES OF SEASONALLY ADJUSTED FIGURE AND GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT FOR 1971

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Finance who, while he is not on the roster, may compensate for the six ministers whose names are on the roster for today but are not present.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I have a question regarding the prediction by government economists that the seasonally adjusted figure for unemployment in 1971 will be in the neighbourhood of 5 per cent to 5½ per cent. Does this express the government's estimate of what the unemployment figure will be for this current year?

Inquiries of the Ministry

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would have to ask my hon. friend a question in return as to the source of that information. I just do not have that information.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would not think this would be an order. Perhaps the hon. member might like to ask a supplementary question.

An hon. Member: We could change the rules.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, the source of that information is a report in this morning's *Globe and Mail* by Mr. David Crane who received this information—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): I will ask the minister a direct question. What is the government's estimate of the seasonally adjustment unemployment figure for this current year?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, the author of the newspaper article obviously had access to the research department of the NDP.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, the government has not stated publicly the seasonally adjusted rate of unemployment for any specific time during the year. It has stated that the seasonally adjusted rate of unemployment will go down from its high of last September of 6.9 per cent, and indeed it has now declined to 6.2 per cent, much to the chagrin of my hon. friend.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, if I can persuade the minister to stop being flippant and try to deal with the question—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: You have a job there.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): In view of the statement by Mr. Smith, the chairman of the Economic Council of Canada, that it will require an increase in real output of 6¾ per cent to get unemployment down to 4 per cent in three years, a 7½ per cent increase to get unemployment down to 4 per cent in two years, and a 10 per cent increase in real output to get unemployment down to 4 per cent in one year, may I ask the minister what the government's estimate is of the increase in real output of the gross national product for 1971?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, when I get around to making my next budget speech in a month or two—April, probably—I will at that time, as usual, forecast what the GNP will be.