

available. The brackets are the areas where disagreements exist in the treaty negotiations.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, why this government is keeping that draft secret from Canadians while it is available to Mexicans.

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, just so the Press Gallery does not think there is any news in that question, all of the bracketed items that he has suggested have been in fact the points of negotiation that we have been discussing for months.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

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EMPLOYMENT

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

There are 1.5 million Canadians who are out of work and 2.3 million Canadians who are on welfare. While the country is on its knees, this government has taken a do nothing, cross your fingers approach. I would like to ask the minister of employment specifically: What programs does he have to put Canadians back to work?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, there is no magic solution to put people back to work. If there were the magic to do it, I guess we would pull it right away.

There is the hard, every day work of preparing the road for recovery through fiscal restraint, through sound monetary policies and through helping our workers improve their skills.

Our efforts are beginning to show. Inflation is dropping. The prime lending rate is at its lowest level since May 1973. Through my Department of Employment and Immigration we have provided some \$3 billion in training and assistance for Canadian workers last year.

We intend to spend as much in the new year trying to put in place programs which are relevant to a work force that has to compete in a global competitive economy.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, a lot of consolation that answer is to the million and a half Canadians who are unemployed.

Oral Questions

Surely the minister must be aware of how desperate the situation is. Surely he must be aware of the pain, the suffering and the anguish. Surely he must be aware that Canadians are losing their jobs and their homes. Their lives are being ruined.

I would like to ask the minister: What specifically is he proposing to put the country back to work? Is he the minister of employment or is he the minister of unemployment?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it is incredible. It depends on the place you occupy in this House. I remember unemployment being at 11.8 per cent without a peep from the hon. member.

The issue is: Can we go out and make believe that we can buy our way out of the problem overnight? I know it is the recipe of the Liberal Party of Canada. The Liberals gave it to us in 1981-82, and I remember what happened then. Interest rates, 10 years ago this morning, were at 20.3 per cent and today they are at the lowest level since 1973. The recovery, that is the way it will occur. Those programs we have in place are intended to equip the work force with the tools and skills it needs to be competitive in a sustainable and growing economy.

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DOMESTIC WORKERS' PROGRAM

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose a question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Last Friday the minister announced some major changes to the Domestic Workers' Program, which is an important part of the child care system in this country. He said: "These measures respond to concerns raised by various groups and individuals".

The fact is that this weekend across Canada thousands of domestic workers and their employers were on the streets saying that these measures were discriminatory, were regressive and were taken without any prior consultation.

In light of these very serious criticisms, will the minister repeal the measures he has announced so that he can undertake a proper meeting and consultation with domestic workers and that the program can be improved and not destroyed?