

Oral Questions

Mr. MacEachen:—arising from the increases in the oil import compensation program and increases in the charges on the public debt. There was no action that was taken by the Government of Canada since we came into office that added to that expenditure line or to the deficit, except for the inevitability which arose from these two particular sources.

An hon. Member: No, you haven't read the budget.

Mr. MacEachen: I am still prepared on this day to say that the commitments made by the Prime Minister with respect to the operation of the fiscal side of the government will be carried out, namely that as economic growth resumes in a phased manner that the deficit will be reduced. These, Madam Speaker, were the words used by the Prime Minister, not the words which have been fabricated in a fevered atmosphere by the hon. member for St. John's West.

● (1450)

The second point is that the former minister of finance referred to a commitment to restrain expenditures in accordance with the real growth of the gross national product. Even a finance minister as reckless as my hon. friend would never make that commitment. The Prime Minister was talking about the trend line of nominal GNP and we will follow that as we reveal our medium-term plans for the House.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

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ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

CHARGE OF RAPE—REQUEST FOR INTRODUCTION OF AMENDING PROVISIONS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Justice. Yesterday an Ontario Supreme Court judge passed a light sentence on a man who was convicted of rape because the victim was, in the judge's words, "a woman of the world" and did not appear to suffer any ill effects from the experience.

The minister has been promising for some time to introduce a long overdue bill to amend the Criminal Code provisions on sexual offences. In June he said it was coming very soon. When is the minister finally going to move on this important question of concern to all Canadian women and, specifically, when will he bring in legislation to reverse the effect of the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision in Forsythe and Pappajohn, to remove a husband's immunity? Finally, when will he move to define rape not as a crime of passion which "women of the world" really enjoy, but as a crime of violent assault?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, I hope to introduce a bill in the coming weeks.

[English]

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): My supplementary question is also to the Minister of Justice. I might add that I hope the Prime Minister will consider replacing him with someone who has some commitment to justice and who is not solely concerned with the constitution. We need a full-time Minister of Justice in this Parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): The minister knows that the Supreme Court of Canada decision in the Pappajohn rape case has caused a great outcry among women's groups all across this country. Will the minister assure this House that our rape laws will be amended so that no man who is accused of rape can claim that he believed, with no reasonable grounds whatsoever, that the woman was really consenting? What action is the minister prepared to take on this recent decision, which is called by some "a rapist's charter" and which is an insult to all Canadian women?

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Madam Speaker, dealing with problems such as those requires considerable thought to make sure that we make well-balanced legislative proposals. We have to study the matter in depth before reaching a decision; the hon. member and the House would be ill served if we were to act too quickly in the matter. Careful thought is preferable and I believe the case mentioned is controversial. The accused must be ensured normal means to defend himself while the victims must be able to get justice. It is no easy matter. I have been addressing the problem since the summer and hope to be in a position to introduce a bill which, by its very nature, will be somewhat controversial. I intend to take all the time that is needed before acting.

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ACCESS TO INFORMATION

PUBLIC OPINION POLLS—REQUEST THAT RESULTS BE PUBLISHED

Mr. André Maltais (Manicouagan): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Justice. Last Friday, he made it known that he intended to table the results of polls held throughout Canada in recent months. Can the Minister of Justice table those findings? How many are available and how many polls have been held in recent months?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, the Canadian Unity Information Office conducted 16 polls in the last 18