

Oral Questions

back on to an even keel with people working and prosperity restored, as opposed to letting us drift more and more into this new Liberal depression?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has asked that we consider calling a conference to find fresh ideas. Presumably he is admitting that there are no fresh ideas in his party—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacEachen:—that he wishes to put forward.

Mr. Stevens: You won't take them.

Mr. MacEachen: However, putting that to one side for a moment, Madam Speaker, we had a first ministers' conference some time ago and the principal idea—it was not exactly fresh—which came from the provincial premiers was to take a very deep devaluation of the currency in order to reduce interest rates. That was not a very good idea, because the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre called it a policy of desperation. Therefore I am not sure if we had another meeting with the premiers that they would come up with the type of fresh ideas the hon. member has in mind, because the idea they brought forward the last time was rejected by the finance critic of his party.

* * *

LABOUR CONDITIONS**MEASURES TO ASSIST YOUNG PEOPLE**

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Madam Speaker, I, too, wish to address my question to the Minister of Finance who seems to be filling in for the Prime Minister and other ministers who could be responsible.

Miss MacDonald: And not doing a very good job of it.

Mr. Oberle: Madam Speaker, I do not recall the sponsor of the National Energy Program to be Mitterrand, Schmidt, Thatcher or Reagan; the sponsor was Lalonde.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Oberle: It is the NEP which crippled the energy industry, and cost hundreds of thousands of jobs and a billion dollars of investment.

Has the minister made himself aware of the hidden horror story in today's unemployment statistics regarding youth? Over half the unemployed are under the age of 25. Government statistics tell us that in April 220,000 people will be leaving universities, and another 348,000 will be leaving our high schools in June, swelling the statistics to almost two million people.

What are the minister and his government doing in the short term to assist the resource industries which normally hire these

students in the summer? Never mind his utopian long-term dream. What is he doing to bring in some programs in the short term to ease this crisis, instead of stubbornly insisting that all our problems are brought upon us by the rest of the world, when they are not?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I believe the hon. member has raised a good point in asking what we are doing to assist young people, especially those who will be on the labour market this summer. I think he ought to be aware that the minister responsible recently announced additional funds totalling \$20 million for the Summer Canada Program.

Mr. Huntington: What about Alsands?

Mr. MacEachen: Those additional funds will enable about 10,000 more young people to obtain summer jobs under the program, bringing the total number employed under Summer Canada to 53,000.

Mr. McDermid: It was 70,000 last year.

Mr. MacEachen: I would go on to add, Madam Speaker, that even though we are attempting to operate under a program of fiscal restraint, we have put aside \$120 million for this summer in order to help young people get jobs.

* * *

● (1240)

NATIONAL DEFENCE**CANADIAN FORCES BASE CHATHAM, N.B.**

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy-Royal): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. The minister will know that in Bathurst in 1976 the Prime Minister stated that the Chatham air force base had "a permanent status in Canada's national defence plan" and that that base would not be closed as long as he was Prime Minister of the country. True to form, he then sanctioned its closure.

An interdepartmental committee was formed late last fall by the minister to make recommendations by the end of January, 1982, on the future of the area. On February 3 the minister reported that the committee was working very hard on the future of Chatham. On Tuesday of this week he stated that a new committee had been formed to look into the matter.

My question to the minister is this, and I would appreciate no mumble jumble about any meeting with the premier yesterday: what are the findings and recommendations of the old committee, why a new committee, and when is the new committee supposed to report?

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, I would like to expand on the fact that it is indeed true that yesterday I met with the Premier of New