

Oral Questions

Mr. J. R. Ellis (Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question which is supplementary to those of my colleague from Vegreville and it is directed to the same minister. As the minister has just agreed, these allegations are not new. The report of the public accounts committee of June indicated the problems. Therefore, would the minister agree that there is little use in our discussing in this House such things as televising parliament, reforming committee structures and strengthening parliament if the basic accounting of the country is so derelict that parliament has no control over spending?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, in candidly suggesting that there is a large area for improvement, I do not think it helps to be so grossly overstating the case as the hon. member is attempting to do now.

MEASURES TO CORRECT ACCOUNTING PRACTICES CRITICIZED
BY THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. J. R. Ellis (Hastings): A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Since the throne speech promised that the government would provide the Auditor General of Canada with "better means of fulfilling his important function", if I am overstating the case would the President of the Treasury Board lay before the House all steps, including any new legislation necessary, which he is taking to put a stop to these sloppy practices? Surely this accusation of a \$7 billion boondoggle demands an immediate and accurate answer in this House.

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the legislation augmenting the facilities and strengthening and augmenting the independence of the Auditor General most certainly will be placed before the House in a very short time. The \$7 billion boondoggle to which the hon. member refers really requires a great deal more analysis than has obviously been given it so far in suggesting any corrective measures that could be taken.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

UNEMPLOYMENT—REASON FOR FAILURE TO PROVIDE
MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister. Considering that unemployment in the country is scarcely new, having run in excess of 7 per cent for the past 18 months, and considering that independent forecasters are saying that for 1977 it will average 7.6 per cent and the same forecasters are saying that this winter it will hit upwards of 9 per cent, would the Acting Prime Minister explain why, during the summer, the cabinet could not come up with one proposal that could be implemented this fall to bring down the rate of unemployment during the coming difficult winter months?

• (1120)

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I refer the hon. member to the excellent statement made in the House last night by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration in which the general employment strategy of the government is laid out.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, it is because I considered the speech the minister referred to with great care that I asked the question. Let me now switch to the minister who made that speech yesterday in the House. Given the fact that early in his address he gives a pious commitment on the part of the government to achieve full employment, but when we get down to the details half way through the speech we find there is nothing new to come into operation until the next fiscal year, can he tell us, as the new Minister of Manpower and Immigration, whether he really is assuming the appropriate responsibility to the people of Canada by taking on the old indolent attitudes of his predecessor?

Hon. Jack Cullen (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would commend greatly to the hon. member's attention the introduction to my speech where I paid glowing tribute to my predecessor for the tremendous number—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cullen: —for the tremendous number of innovative measures that were introduced under his stewardship while in that particular portfolio. I remember one statistic, Mr. Speaker, regarding the LIP program, where 93,000 jobs were created over a very difficult winter period as a result of a program, not proposed by the NDP, but under the Local Initiatives Program. There was a myriad of other actions and steps taken by my predecessor recognizing the difficulties of unemployment without, hopefully, exacerbating inflation, as the hon. member's party seems to be advocating on almost a daily basis.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that if every job which is listed as being available in Canada were taken up by the unemployed there would still be more than 600,000 Canadians looking for work, so I do not think he should be complimenting his predecessor. I would ask the minister if he takes seriously the contention he made in his speech that "at the beginning of the 1980's" we are actually going to have a shortage of labour in Canada. Does the minister take this seriously and will he please explain to the House why he believes that? Would he also explain how that would be of any consolation at all to the more than 700,000 Canadians who are now looking for work?

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, once again I do not know where the hon. member was last night, but he obviously did not correctly read the statement. I indicated that we were more concerned with immediate problems of unemployment and pointed to the fact that in the early 1980's we would very likely face a shortage of workers rather than jobs. I indicated