

Oral Questions

action to try to reduce that imbalance which is favourable to the Americans.

[English]

Mr. Kempling: Noting that the report indicates that Canada has not maintained its proportional share of new employment, new investment or research and development resulting from the over-all expansion of the north American automobile production, can the minister tell the House whether the existing distribution of the benefits of the auto pact trade is acceptable to him and, if not, whether he plans any measures to ensure that Canada obtains a better deal from the auto pact trade?

● (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I cannot agree with the premises of the hon. member's question because when the auto pact was signed Canada accounted for only 6.7 per cent of the North American production whereas it now accounts for 12.5 per cent of the production and 10 per cent of the consumption, which indicates that in recent years this program was extremely beneficial for Canada. However, there is still a gap and I intend to take all the means required to try to fill it.

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[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

REQUEST OF PREMIER SCHREYER FOR FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE ON UNEMPLOYMENT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. It has to do with the cold shoulder he has been giving to Premier Schreyer after Premier Schreyer asked the Prime Minister whether he would be prepared to hold a first ministers conference in order to deal with unemployment and, in particular, job creation. The Prime Minister indicated that he would look into his files, inasmuch as the second request came when he was at the Commonwealth Conference, in order to see just what occurred. In light of the importance of this matter has the Prime Minister had an opportunity to look into his files, did he leave instructions that this conference, which would be of significant benefit to Canadians, should be convened, and is the Prime Minister prepared to start the ball rolling?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have ascertained that I did answer Premier Schreyer's letter to me. The essence of the federal position is that if our officials and eventually ministers of finance and manpower ministers can meet and make some progress with the kind of idea Premier Schreyer has, we then could usefully consider convening a federal-provincial conference of first ministers. However, at this stage I do not think the latter conference should be convened until preliminary work has been done.

[Mr. Chrétien.]

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, in light of the seriousness of this matter and given the fact that we are losing billions of dollars in productivity as well as tax revenue, can the Prime Minister advise whether he has any specific timetable for the first ministers to meet in order to discuss this very serious matter? In other words, we cannot wait forever before the government starts to show some initiative in this regard.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we are not asking the opposition or the premiers to wait forever. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources announced a program which will be good for Canada from an employment point of view, from an economic point of view and from an energy saving point of view. Of course, the premiers and the opposition were very prompt in criticizing the program. They cannot on the one hand ask us to co-operate with the provinces and then disagree when, after having consulted the provinces, we go ahead with a proposal.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: All I want is for the Prime Minister to take it upon himself to convene a first ministers conference as soon as possible—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Red Deer.

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INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, in light of the statement made earlier this week by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and in light of the reply just given by the Prime Minister I would like to ask a question of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Can the minister assure this House that governing by edict rather than by consultation and co-operation with provincial governments, as evidenced by his announcement of requirements for qualification for home insulation grants—an absolute invasion of provincial jurisdiction—will not continue to be federal policy? Instead, will this government make an attempt to govern adequately matters over which it has a constitutional right?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

DATE OF DECISION ON PURCHASE OF STATION CJBR

Mr. Eymard Corbin (Madawaska-Victoria): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State. It is similar to that of the hon. member for Rimouski and follows many others which I have asked in that connection.