

young people, and today the Hon. Member is saying we are doing too much, compared to what is being done for older workers. I may remind her that the Government has direct job creation programs some of which are mainly aimed at young workers, but there is also a substantial number aimed at all workers, including the older workers.

I may also remind her that the Department of Employment and Immigration has special programs for the people to which the Hon. Member is referring. These include the program based on Section 38 of the Unemployment Insurance Act as well as the labour adjustment programs, some of which are being used to help the textile and footwear industry. We have set up programs specifically aimed at older workers who have not yet reached retirement age but are facing a difficult situation in industries that are in a relative decline. We have adjustment programs for these workers to help them cope with these very difficult circumstances.

I should be happy to send the Hon. Member a list of these programs if she does not yet have that information.

● (1125)

[English]

LONG-TERM IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, the Minister says he wishes I would be consistent. I wish he would not attempt to deceive people.

Has the Minister read this letter from the Canadian Council of Social Development which points out so dramatically the plight of the older worker? We know the great difficulty with younger workers, but the Government also has to realize that there are real problems for those people who are older. They point specifically to the age group between 55 and 65 who are living in real difficulty. The Council also asks the Minister whether he would put more study into the long term problems arising from unemployment.

In light of the studies being done in the United States, which I raised with the Minister last week, will he not take this recommendation of the Canadian Council on Social Development and look into the long-term impact of unemployment and what it is doing to the people of this country? It is really having disastrous effects on their lives.

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I have read the letter thoroughly to which the Hon. Member refers.

Miss MacDonald: Your colleague has not.

Mr. Roberts: I had some discussions with the people serving on the Committee on Social Development. I have also raised these questions, to which the Hon. Member has referred, with my provincial counterparts at the meeting held in Saint John a few days ago. Yes, we are concerned about both the short-term and the longer-term implications.

Oral Questions

Miss MacDonald: I am glad you are. The Minister of Finance is not.

Mr. Roberts: It was as a result of that, that the provincial Ministers at that conference agreed with me that we would try to hold a special conference of employment ministers on this subject and on, for instance, skills development and literacy problems, sometime before this summer. We are working on that conference. It may not prove to be possible to have it as quickly as we would like, but the employment ministers in Saint John agreed with me that we would try to organize such a conference before the summer.

Miss MacDonald: Thank God. You are more humane than the Minister of Finance.

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FINANCE

INCREASE IN INTEREST RATES

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday the chartered banks, following the direction of the Bank of Canada, raised their interest rates again for mortgages and consumer loans. For the past number of weeks the Minister of Finance has been repeating that the Government does not have a high interest rate policy, yet every week we see the bank interest rates sneak and creep up to a higher and higher level.

The course of action being followed by the banks now is the same course that was followed in 1981 when we saw interest rates go from 18 per cent in May to 19 per cent in June, to 20 per cent in July, and to 21 per cent in August. If the systematic increase in interest rates that we now see occurring is not part of a high interest policy, would the Minister care to tell the House and the Canadian public what is a high interest rate policy?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to use the expression of the Hon. Member and ask him what the NDP was saying when the interest rate in Canada was sneaking and creeping down from 21 per cent to 11 per cent? Were members of the DNP claiming that the federal Government had a low interest policy and that this was terrible? They were not, obviously. They were realizing that the economy was evolving in a situation both in Canada and the United States where we were able to have a situation in which interest rates were coming down.

● (1130)

At the present time, as I have indicated, we have a situation where we have practically eliminated the difference between the U.S. and Canadian rates. We have been able to bring interest rates in this country down to the levels of the United States whereas, before the six and five program, for instance, we had a spread of up to 4 per cent and 5 per cent above United States rates. If the United States rates go up, as they have been creeping up since January, it is unrealistic to expect