

Oral Questions

Solicitor General. Many Canadians are helping to control the national debt. They are supporting the new philosophy of economic responsibility and restraint which now exists. What measures are being used by the Solicitor General's Department and how is the inmate population in Canada contributing to the control of this debt, reducing expenditures, and sharing in the economic responsibilities of the nation?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I say to my colleague that the cost of maintaining inmates is the responsibility of the Corrections Services of Canada. The security costs remain very high. However, I would like to remind the Hon. Member that we do operate industrial shops, greenhouses, and farms, and to the extent possible we try to be as cost effective as we can under the circumstances.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

JOB-CREATION PROGRAMS

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Fifty years ago today a large number of unemployed were stopped on their trek to Ottawa in a brutal way by the Conservative Bennett Government of that day. Today some of those people completed that trek, with many other behind them. Their demands are the same, "work and wages". Since the Budget had no specific programs for job creation, would the Minister tell the House when she is going to announce specific programs for job creation, and would she tell us what goals she wishes to attain by those programs?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I know that it is sometimes difficult for the Hon. Member to accept the fact that there are facts and figures in the Budget which pertain to job creation and training. In this case there is some \$900 million additional dollars for job creation and training.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: I can also tell the Hon. Member that I had the opportunity to meet this morning with this group of people who had come to Ottawa to discuss their concerns and their needs, and also to tell them the trend which has been developing in the last number of months; the creation of some 270,000 jobs since September; the fact that every single sector of the economy improved as far as jobs were concerned last month, and the fact that unemployment insurance will be reviewed positively.

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Miss MacDonald: All of these things were discussed, Mr. Speaker, and these people said they appreciated the fact that we were able to get together and discuss these matters.

Mr. Keeper: No, they were disappointed.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, the Minister has announced that \$900 million several times, and we still have not seen the details. We were all pleased last week to see last month's slight improvement in employment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allmand: We were all pleased about that. But no one can be content with a 10.5 per cent unemployment level. No one can celebrate that figure. I want to ask the Minister if she is content with 10.5 per cent unemployment? If she is not, what is her goal, and how does she intend to achieve a goal which is much lower? It was 7 per cent before the recession.

● (1450)

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, of course no one is satisfied with 10.5 per cent unemployment. It was 11.6 per cent when we came into office, and it is on its way down. I would also tell the Hon. Member, because he does not seem to realize these things, that, yes, we did announce \$900 million for job creation and training in February, but it was an additional \$900 million announced in the Budget.

* * *

PENSIONS

REQUEST FOR RESTORATION OF FULL INDEXATION

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Fifty years ago young unemployed men attempted to come to Ottawa to demand jobs. Today another Conservative Government is reducing their pension benefits.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. de Jong: Will the Prime Minister not admit that the policy of making the victims pay, and not those who own, control, and manage our economy, is as wrong today as it was in the time of R. B. Bennett? Will he stop repeating past mistakes, and not proceed with the deindexing of the Old Age Security pensions?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I am sure, Mr. Speaker, when my hon. friend reflects tonight or tomorrow upon that question, he will be before you asking that it be withdrawn. It is really quite unworthy.

The fact is that since we came to office we have managed, through co-operation with the private sector, trade unions, indeed all groups, to bring down interest rates by almost 3 per cent, and 271,000 new jobs have been created. In the months of April and May a total of 159,000 new jobs have been created, the largest back-to-back job creation figures since Statistics Canada began compiling them in 1953. That is great news for Canada, and you should stand up and celebrate it.