

Oral Questions

said it would be, will the minister reconsider the answer he gave yesterday? Can he tell the House, for instance, that the government will consider bringing in a special summer works project that will deal with this extremely high level of unemployment in a serious manner?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker, I cannot give that undertaking.

UNEMPLOYMENT—POSSIBILITY OF NATIONAL PROGRAM OF RESIDENTIAL INSULATION TO CREATE JOBS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Considering that the cost of current levels of unemployment to employed Canadians is about \$9 billion per year, some \$2 billion being for welfare and unemployment insurance payments, \$6 billion for lost productivity, the rest being made up of taxes not paid by the unemployed, would the minister consider financing a national program of insulation for residential buildings across the country which has been estimated to cost about \$1 billion? That \$1 billion would provide at least 4,000 additional jobs and be important in conserving energy.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the hon. member's proposal has merit. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has already implemented such a program in two provinces and obviously is concerned about its application in all of Canada. The hon. member mentioned that the cost of such program would be \$1 billion per year. At the present time it is not possible to find resources to add to the present budget to finance such a special program, although undoubtedly the suggestion has all the benefits the hon. member says it has.

Mr. Broadbent: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. When we first proposed such an insulation program last September we did not anticipate that even the government would take it up in such a half-hearted way as to apply it to two provinces. We estimated at that time that the savings in energy costs alone to the Canadian economy in the years ahead would justify the capital expenditure. Considering the savings in energy, which are so important to the Canadian economy as a whole, and considering the need to provide jobs early in the summer months particularly for young Canadians, will the minister not make a commitment to go ahead with this eminently sensible program?

Mr. MacEachen: I think it is eminently sensible but not financially possible at the present time, Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Broadbent.]

[Translation]

FINANCE

PROPOSITIONS CONCERNING TAXING OF LIFE INSURANCE BENEFITS

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance is not in the House, may I direct my question to the acting minister?

Considering the strong protest from members of life underwriters organizations against the new budget proposals of March 31 last concerning the taxation on life insurance proceeds, and in view of the fact that these new proposals will result mainly in penalizing the families of policyholders, could the minister tell the House whether he intends to reply to the statements made by the members of life underwriters organizations and if so, when and how?

[English]

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member may be aware, we have given first reading—or are about to—to all the budgetary proposals that have been put forward by the Minister of Finance. They will be before the House in the present session, and before the committee of the whole, and it will be possible for the hon. member to make direct representations and receive direct explanations on this point at that time from the Minister of Finance.

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[Translation]

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

INQUIRY IF MR. JUSTICE BERGER HAS RESUMED DUTIES AS JUDGE

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, my question—

[English]

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wagner: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Could the minister inform the House if, according to his terms of reference, Mr. Justice Berger has now completed his task with the tabling of his report and if he has now resumed his duties as a supreme court judge of British Columbia?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I understand Mr. Justice Berger intends to issue another report as a second volume. He has not resumed his duties at present as a member of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, but I know that he and his Chief Justice have discussed privately the date on which this is to occur.