

Oral Questions

On the second matter, that of regional incentives, if the opposition look at the March budget and at the November statement of the Minister of Finance, they will see that those two statements contain incentives for regional development and particular incentives for the areas where there is high unemployment—so thank you very much for your support.

Miss MacDonald: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. After that recital, that litany of the Prime Minister's statement as to what his action has produced—namely, one million unemployed Canadians—I must say that is not the kind of band wagon that we choose to be on.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: I thought the Prime Minister was discussing the agenda with the first ministers two months ago, but he does not seem to have arrived at an agenda—so he says—in all that time. I should like to ask whether he will now consider canvassing them this weekend with specific proposals to deal with the unemployment situation, or is he really telling us that the one million unemployed Canadians will be the forgotten group at the first ministers' conference?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the hon. lady cannot have it both ways—recommend that we adopt certain initiatives recommended by the C.D. Howe Research Institute and then, when informed we have already taken them, claim that they are not right. Either she thinks they are right, or she thinks they are not. If she thinks they are right, she should congratulate the government for having taken the action.

As far as the agenda is concerned, Mr. Speaker, we are proceeding in the normal way, through consultation with the provinces. I realize the opposition would be much more heavy-handed and would decide unilaterally what the agenda should be, but that is not our way. We have proposed an agenda to the provinces. There has been not only an exchange of correspondence, in which they have suggested modifications to the agenda, but there have been at least two full-scale meetings of provincial officials with federal officials. It is as a result of this that I am today proposing to the provinces the final agenda, taking into account their various suggestions.

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. In all that wriggling and evasion, the Prime Minister failed to answer the specific question asked by my colleague, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands. Is the Prime Minister, and the government of Canada, making specific proposals to the first ministers' conference next week for immediate action to help the unemployed of Canada?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, there is no evasion in indicating that over a period of months we have been proposing various initiatives, some of which have been belatedly espoused by the opposition. Next week the opposition will again have the occasion to evade its responsibility by not supporting more of the government's suggestions.

[Mr. Trudeau.]

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, for the fourth time I put the simple question. Will the Prime Minister be making specific proposals to the first ministers' conference regarding action that can be taken immediately to create jobs for Canadians? This is the fourth time the question has been asked today.

Will the Prime Minister continue to evade the question, or will he tell this House whether the government is accepting its responsibility and will propose specific policies to the first ministers' conference to provide jobs, now, for Canadians?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, by asking the question four times, the Leader of the Opposition indicates that he does not have a very good grasp of the subject.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, this charade cannot go on—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: —with one million Canadians out of work, and the Prime Minister of Canada laughing and playing word games with parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: We have asked whether he is going to propose immediate action that can help Canadians who are out of work to find jobs. We have asked that simple question four times, and four times he has evaded it. I now ask a fifth time: Will the Prime Minister face up to his responsibility and say whether he is going to make that kind of proposal next week to the first ministers' conference?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, this is, indeed, beginning to look like a charade. This question has been asked repeatedly by the opposition, and from this side of the House we have repeatedly given answers. I will repeat some of them. I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that I am not sure the opposition really wants the answers, nor, having received them, whether they understand them. I will repeat a few of them given by the Minister of Finance and other ministers on this side.

In the course of a 12-month period we have cut personal taxes and ensured that consumers benefit from these tax measures to the tune of \$2 billion. We have also cut corporation taxes to the tune of \$900 million. We have, also, budgeted and begun spending for direct job creation to the extent of \$1 billion. The opposition says today—and I understand the Leader of the Opposition had occasion to say it yesterday in Toronto—that we should be cutting \$2 billion from spending. Our answer is that we have already done that.

An hon. Member: That is not true.

Mr. Trudeau: Thank you very much for supporting the government.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I can see that we may get into a rather protracted debate on this subject, and I think the matter should conclude now, it being three o'clock. The hon. member for Edmonton West on a question of privilege.