

In his November budget, the Minister of Finance applied this general rule to those whose employers offered group insurance and who had enjoyed special taxation privileges for a very long time. As far as I am concerned, this is only fair.

[English]

QUERY RESPECTING MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, could the Minister of National Health and Welfare explain to the House why she is concerned about the withdrawal of funds for dental care provided for children under the age of 15 in the province of Quebec, as she mentioned earlier, but she is not concerned that many millions of Canadians from all provinces will lose their dental care insurance provisions for children? Why is she concerned about the one situation and yet not concerned about the other?

Mr. Siddon: How about the whole country?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, I believe that the hon. member, who is my official critic and who has not until now asked me very many questions, would have found it useful to be briefed by my department. I would be happy to organize such a briefing to explain to him how health care operates in Canada.

The Quebec health minister is now trying to do away with the public dental care program for all Quebec children under 15. This is what he is trying to do. This plan is paid for by all the taxpayers. The Canadian taxpayers pay about 50 per cent of the costs. This is unacceptable in view of the importance of dental health in one province, while on the other hand, in the proposals contained in the November budget, the Minister of Finance is correcting an injustice which allowed a few Canadians to deduct from their income tax the contributions paid by their employers to a group dental insurance plan. The two matters are not at all related. The other Canadians who could not join such a plan have had to pay the full cost. They will still have to pay the full cost. Nothing much will change in the health care system of Canada. This is a matter of equity.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

PRESS REPORT ON JOB-CREATION PROGRAMS

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance, who has undoubtedly noticed in his briefing book that the Canadian Press has been informed by one of his cabinet colleagues that the government is considering certain job-creation programs which could cost as much as \$1 billion and may involve 100,000 jobs, and that his colleague, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, has confirmed that a wide range of possibilities are being considered, which the Minister of State

Oral Questions

for Mines has also confirmed. Would the Minister of Finance inform the House if this is correct? Is it true that such job-creation programs of a new nature are being considered by the government and, in particular, by his department; if so, when may we hear some details?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, earlier yesterday, I indicated to the Leader of the Opposition that when any decisions were made, they would be announced. I have also indicated that I am not prepared to disclose what is going on—

Mr. Clark: That is not what you said.

Mr. MacEachen: —in the government. It is not customary to disclose the proceedings of the cabinet anywhere.

Mr. Clark: That is not what you said.

CONSIDERATION OF NEW PROGRAMS

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, I am sure that upon reflection the Minister of Finance will realize that that is not exactly what he said earlier. Would he answer the simple question: is he considering new programs as a result of requests made by one or more of his cabinet colleagues?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): The answer to that question is absolutely no. I have been listening to hon. members of the House of Commons, both here and in my own caucus, concerning various proposals. Obviously all of these ideas and possibilities are examined as a matter of course. Inasmuch as the hon. member has referred to the letter signed by a number of colleagues, I must say that so far as I am concerned, the letter is quite supportive—

● (1200)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stevens: You better read it again.

Mr. MacEachen: Madam Speaker, when the letter was first drawn to my attention I noticed that the members stated they were totally supportive of the necessity of overcoming price increases or the high level of prices in order to restore jobs and growth in the economy. That was the central thrust of the budget.

They also went on to say that they were not asking for excessive stimulus to the economy at the present time—

Mr. Nielsen: They said now.

Mr. MacEachen: —and to suggest a number of specific programs which might be considered. I thought it was fully in accordance with the statement I made in Toronto at the Canadian Club, and I must say I have never been able to get myself excited as others have about this letter and its alleged difference with government policy.

Mr. Clark: Why did you run away from the vote?