

Oral Questions

wages and salaries has been a result of the recession-depression, and that the de-escalation in price increases has also been a result of the recession-depression-like conditions?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member must not have listened to the program, either. I did not take credit for any reduction in inflation. I said that the Canadian people should be congratulated for having, by an act of national will, brought inflation down.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: I was asking myself how both Opposition Parties would greet the news yesterday that inflation had been cut by more than half in one year—

Mr. Stevens: It is still double the American level.

Mr. Trudeau:—when, last year, everything we heard from the other side of the House, and, indeed, much of the legitimate complaint of the country was that inflation was too high—

Mr. Stevens: So it was.

Mr. Trudeau:—and that interest rates were too high—

Mr. Stevens: So they were.

Mr. Trudeau:—and that they should be brought down—

Mr. Stevens: So they should.

Mr. Trudeau:—in order that jobs be created. I knew that they would find an answer. I did not know what it would be, but I knew it would be certain not to recognize that it was a good thing that inflation came down. They would find something else, and they did.

An Hon. Member: And not very well.

Mr. Trudeau: And not very well, as my colleague says. The fact is that inflation was cut in half. The fact is that a year ago the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party were complaining about inflation being double digit and being too high. All of this has come down in the space of the year. I think the Canadian people can take credit for that, no matter what the opposition says.

● (1430)

Mr. Riis: I welcome that clarification. Just so that we all understand, the Prime Minister is saying that the six and five program of the Government had nothing to do with the de-escalation in inflation. I think that has been clarified, then.

REQUEST THAT MEETING OF FIRST MINISTERS BE CONVENED

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Madam Speaker, it became clear from the Prime Minister's speech on television last night that the further actions of the Government will not be to create long term meaningful jobs, because of its obvious inability to do so, but to continue with more wage restraint. He

indicated a call to the Finance Ministers to discuss the issue of continuous restraint.

Considering the fact that two million people are still left jobless, by his own admission last night, would the Prime Minister not consider it more appropriate to call a meeting of First Ministers to discuss the issue of how to get Canadians back to work, as opposed to discussing further ways of trying to restrain public servants?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the question is obviously rhetorical. If the Hon. Member is asking about what I said last night, the message was not essentially one of restraint but one of coming prosperity.

More importantly, the message was that if we wanted prosperity to continue coming we had to keep inflation down. That is the view of this side of the House. If the other side want to argue that that is not important, that we can shoot inflation up again and everything will be okay, let them take the responsibility for that policy. I would suggest that it is not the policy of the new Leader of the Conservative Party nor, hopefully, of the Leader or new leader of the New Democratic Party.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Once again, I challenge the New Democratic Party, as I challenge the Tory Party, to state that the fight against inflation is over to the point where we do not have to worry about it again and the Minister of Finance does not have to discuss that subject. Perhaps the Parties opposite feel that inflation has definitely been wrestled to the ground, but I am not sure that is true.

PLIGHT OF UNEMPLOYED

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister. He should know about wrestling inflation to the ground. He has been in the ring with it for 14 years.

Madam Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member is again commenting on the answer. Members must proceed right to their question.

Mr. Waddell: It is so tempting, Madam Speaker.

Would the Prime Minister not agree that the reality of the situation is that we have to deal with the unemployed? We have 1.5 million unemployed. For example, what do I tell my people in British Columbia today when the Prime Minister refuses to award a shipbuilding contract on a regional basis? There is no work for those yards out there. There is no work for a lot of other people in other industries.

Why does the Prime Minister not agree with what Premier Pawley said, and call a First Ministers' Conference on what everyone in the country is concerned about, which is not inflation but unemployment?