

TRADE

GATT NEGOTIATIONS ON TARIFFS ON FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND HORTICULTURAL PRODUCTS—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, as is usual on this first day of spring, I rise in my place under the provisions of Standing Order 43 to seek unanimous consent on an urgent and pressing matter, nothing being more urgent and pressing on a day like this than the evidence of spring symbolized by the daffodils from the riding of Esquimalt-Saanich that are being made available to all members in the lobbies today; evidence, further, if we look outside today, that there is a vast range of vegetational maturity in this country of ours, earlier in the west than in central Canada. In view of these circumstances, and because of the current GATT discussions in Geneva, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon):

That this House commend to the current government, and in particular the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, in close consultation with the Horticultural Council, an urgent re-examination of the GATT proposals to ensure that a seasonally and regionally adjusted tariff concept be put forward at the GATT discussions to ensure that Canadian fruit, vegetable and horticultural production, on a regional basis, shall not suffer, thereby protecting the incomes of Canadians whose livelihoods depend on these products.

Mr. Speaker: The presentation of such a motion for debate, pursuant to Standing Order 43, requires the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

GOVERNMENT ACTION TO REDUCE NUMBER OF BANKRUPTCIES

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Finance, the "stand pat" minister who seems to be running around the country saying that everything is all right while the country is going down the drain. We note that in the year 1977 we had some 4,000 bankruptcies, an all-time record. In the month of January, 1978, we had 503 bankruptcies, twice that of January 1977. My question is simply this: What is the minister going to do? What special steps is he prepared to take in order to reduce this very alarming trend of increasing bankruptcies?

● (1417)

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am very amazed that the hon. member should have put that question. For the last three years he has been advocating a return to the marketplace so that the marketplace could decide who should survive and who should not. I want to remind him

Oral Questions

that we have established economic policies and guidelines. I am informed that in January there was a big increase in retail sales, as compared with last year. We are hoping that the tax incentives provided in Bill C-11, which was passed by the House last December, will produce the results expected from them.

Mr. Alexander: Judging from that answer, I gather the minister's attitude seems to be "Wait, wait, wait", while the country is going down the drain. I would point out that we are facing an all-time level of bankruptcies and that unemployment is at an all-time high. When will the hon. gentleman have any evidence that the ineffective stimulus he has provided with respect to the economy is working so that the House and the country may know whether or not a budget is needed?

Mr. Chrétien: Again, I am very amazed by the hon. member's question. Most of his hon. friends are telling the public that we are running too big a deficit, but today he is suggesting we should incur an even larger deficit. I wish hon. members on the other side would make up their minds and produce a coherent policy.

Mr. Alexander: All I know is that the Canadian people are getting tired of the minister's complacency, hesitancy, foot-dragging and ineffectiveness.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

DEPARTMENTAL STATEMENT ON UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES—REQUEST ACCURATE STATISTICS BE GIVEN

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): I should like to pose a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce—who I hope will be more responsible than the Minister of Finance—regarding unemployment. Mrs. Dagum, who is the economist responsible for seasonally adjusting the unemployment figures, has stated:

There is need for a new definition of unemployment if we don't want to mislead people. I don't think the figures we now have really represent unemployment.

Now that we know the figures concerning unemployment are misleading to a certain extent, will the minister take such steps as are required to ensure that the House and the country get the proper figures? Further, will he discuss this matter with Mrs. Dagum to see that the House is not misled in future?

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): I would agree we do need a more realistic set of figures by which to gauge unemployment. If the opposition would allow the government to devise a new set of statistics and would not complain about the new system, we might well go ahead.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!