

Oral Questions

the priority of this Government over the next year. I am very pleased to assure the Hon. Member about that.

EFFECT OF UNEMPLOYMENT ON PEOPLE

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Madam Speaker, in terms of that response, we have seen the results of the Government's economic policies. We know that there are two million Canadians out of work, who are told repeatedly that to expect work is being unrealistic. We have a generation of young Canadians who are being told that they might never find meaningful work. We are finding people who have to retire ten years early. To say that being age 55 and out of work, you are better off dead, is also being heard. We have had three days of rioting and demonstrations in the Gaspé area. Is this the kind of policy that we can expect now and in the future, that is, fighting the problems of Canada's economy on the backs of Canadian workers, as the Minister has been doing for the last three years?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I would remind my hon. friend that he seems to be looking at Canada only. In the last while we have had thirty million people unemployed in the OECD countries. That is a worldwide problem. Things have been improving lately. I am glad to see they have improved more rapidly since last November in Canada than in almost any other industrial country.

This has meant, for instance, that we have created 328,000 new jobs between last November and last July. It has meant that we have reduced inflation more than any other country. It has meant that we have been creating jobs just as fast as any other industrial country, and we intend to continue doing so, making our economy grow as fast as we can possibly make it grow, and thereby reduce unemployment. Our unemployment level is high, and it is a source of concern. But it would be misleading to let people believe that somehow Canada can isolate itself from the world context in which we live, and that tomorrow anybody could cut unemployment by half. We will have to address this question consistently and do everything we can together.

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, I make no apologies for looking at Canada. I am aware that we have two million out of work. All indications now suggest that figure will likely remain at that level for a number of years. It is very nice for the Minister of Finance to stand up in his position and listen to the National Business Council advise Canadians from high salaried positions that the rest of Canada simply has to stand back and wait.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER SET FULL EMPLOYMENT TARGET

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Madam Speaker, other countries have set targets for their unemployment levels. They have identified full employment targets. Japan is one, West Germany is one, and Switzerland is one. Why does Canada not do the same thing and set some targets so we can start moving unemployment levels down, and implement some

strategies to accomplish that, rather than simply accepting the status quo and saying to two million Canadians, "That is the price you have to pay"?

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Nielsen: Yes or no, Marc.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I take the question of the Hon. Member very seriously. We have indeed expressed our concern about the unemployment situation. We have not only expressed our concern but we have dealt with it and led a strong attack on unemployment. The last budget included the provision of \$4.8 billion in expenditures having to do with stimulus to the private sector, having to do with public expenditure. In addition, only in this year we are spending over \$1.5 billion directly in terms of direct job creation. Our target is to reduce unemployment in Canada as fast and as much as we can. Our target is to create the largest possible number of jobs. In that sense we are all for full employment but we realize you cannot have it the next morning. It is easy to make a speech about it, but we have to take steps to achieve it. This Government has not only spoken and made speeches about it, but we have been acting on it as well.

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● (1430)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF COMMONWEALTH MINISTERS OF HEALTH

Madam Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of the House to the distinguished presence in our gallery of the Minister of Health of the countries of the Commonwealth, who are attending a conference in Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

EFFECT OF BOMBARDIER CONTRACT ON JOB CREATION

Mr. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Supply and Services. In a somewhat laconic press release issued yesterday, his colleague the Minister of National Defence announced that the Quebec-based Bombardier Corporation had been awarded a \$68-million contract. Could the minister indicate to the House what will be the impact of this decision on the employment and economic situations in Quebec? At the same time, could the minister indicate whether there is any connection between this contract and the Volkswagen file about which so much more has been written than about this \$68-million contract?