

Oral Questions

Mr. Mulroney: What we have is a former Minister of Finance, who is chairman of a royal commission, delivering himself of what I understood was a personal view at a conference in New York. I read it along with the Hon. Member. I did not conclude that Mr. Macdonald was trying to pre-empt or anticipate the definitive conclusions of his colleagues. It was clearly stipulated to be a personal view on the one hand. On the other hand, Mr. MacMillan, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry, and many others, have different views on this vital matter, which will form the object of a discussion paper. We hope there will be debate in the House to obtain the benefit of the views, experience and knowledge of Hon. Members on all sides of the House of Commons so that we can design and implement a trade policy which will create new jobs and new wealth for Canadians. That is what we would like.

COSTS OF COMMISSION

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister aware that his House Leader at the time the royal commission was established indicated that the money which was to be spent would have been better spent assisting those on UIC to extend their benefit period, or perhaps assisting those in need of family allowance, with some kind of indexing? Does he not now feel that all that money may well have been wasted, given that the decision which will be taken by the royal commission was pre-empted by a senior policy adviser who claims that the Government is not likely to proceed with sectoral free trade?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would not necessarily disagree with the view held by the House Leader if it was expressed many months ago. The royal commission has been under way for a considerable period of time. Indeed it has been a costly royal commission. It may very well be that, upon reflection, even my hon. friends, were they still in government, would have decided to do something different.

However, we were confronted with a situation where the royal commission was just about to report. It will, very soon. We felt that it was prudent and proper in the circumstances that we receive the benefit of whatever extensive work has been done, and not chop it off eleven-twelfths of the way. Hopefully we will receive some value for the very substantial amount of money expended in this area.

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[Translation]

TRANSPORT

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE TOLLS—GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Fernand Jourdenais (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Transport.

Whereas the Government of Quebec has decided to abolish tolls on the Province's expressways and a start has already been made with dismantling toll booths, and since the Champlain Bridge, which is federal property, is the only federal toll bridge in Canada—I am referring to the bridge between Montreal Island and the South Shore—could the Minister inform this House as soon as possible of his policy on the Champlain Bridge toll?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, it is true that the Quebec Government has decided to abolish tolls on Quebec highways. That is the Quebec Government's decision and it is not for us to comment. On the other hand, it is also true that considering the present state of our finances, we cannot afford to spend \$6 million in addition to the \$3 million we are spending already on the Champlain Bridge. However, we are prepared to consider other options should the financial situation improve.

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[English]

IMMIGRATION

NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS TO BE ADMITTED IN 1985

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Yesterday the Minister announced plans to admit between 85,000 and 90,000 immigrants to Canada for 1985. This is a reduction of 5,000 to 10,000, including a reduction in the family category to 45,000. Considering the Minister and her Leader forecast improvements in the economy and increases in jobs in 1985, would she explain why she targeted for immigration reductions, particularly reductions in the family class category?

● (1440)

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, in the past two years immigration has been below the projections that were announced annually by the Liberal Government. In the consultations that took place with the provinces and with a number of groups over a period of months during this year as to what the level should be for 1985, it was felt that the announced level was far more realistic.

I also said yesterday that I am very concerned about the immigration trends in this country, that we are not satisfied with what is happening. It is for that reason we have announced a full review of immigration policy. We will, therefore, be looking at immigration levels in the light of what the country really needs.

Mr. Allmand: I should remind the Minister that there were reviews, by W. G. Robinson in 1983, and a complete review and overhaul in 1976.