

[Translation]

FINANCE

FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Finance.

As unemployment is rising at an appalling rate, will the minister say whether he intends, with the agreement of the provinces, to make massive investments in various public works in Canada?

[English]

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): First of all, the premise is incorrect; second, the hon. member will have to wait for policies until the budget speech.

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AUDITOR GENERAL

DOWNGRADING OF POSITIONS OF SENIOR OFFICERS

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): I have a question for the President of the Treasury Board. In view of the great seriousness surrounding the situation concerning the Auditor General at the present time, would the government give serious consideration to reversing its decision to downgrade 28 members of the Auditor General's staff?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): It is hard to give serious consideration to most of the hon. gentleman's suggestions. He is probably unaware, by reason of the poor attendance of his party at the committee meetings, that this particular topic is under discussion there.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hees: Since the minister refuses to answer my question I will ask him a supplementary question. Is not—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I recognize the hon. member for a supplementary question but it is difficult for the Chair to hear him.

Mr. Hees: Is not this move an attempt to do by indirect means what the government fears to do by direct means, simply a conspiracy to stifle the Auditor General, and will the government please cease—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): May I ask the minister whether he would be prepared to table any letters between his departmental officials, himself and the Auditor General in relation to the downgrading of the Auditor General and his staff at the present time?

Mr. Drury: Yesterday the Auditor General tabled such letters. May I point out, Mr. Speaker, that if the Opposition would just attend the meetings of the committee we would not have these questions.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Inquiries of the Ministry

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Woolliams: I should like to ask the minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is the hon. member for South Shore rising on a question of privilege?

Mr. Crouse: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The President of the Treasury Board has made allegations in the House which are not correct and I ask that they be withdrawn. I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee and as a member of the Official Opposition I, along with three of my colleagues, was in attendance at the meeting when the papers were tabled.

An hon. Member: Where were the others?

Mr. Crouse: Mr. Speaker, if you can quiet this babble of the rabble I will go on with my point of order.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Crouse: The government is trying to silence the Auditor General, but they are not going to silence me.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crouse: During my 14 years here, I have made a point of trying not to interrupt other members, when they speak in the House.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Crouse: I would ask that members on the government side follow the same course if we are to have any decorum in this chamber. I wish to state that members of the Official Opposition were in attendance at the meeting yesterday to which the President of the Privy Council referred. I, therefore, ask him to withdraw the allegation that members of the Official Opposition were not in attendance at that meeting yesterday.

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, if I made an allegation which was incorrect in fact, I hasten to correct it in any way necessary. Perhaps rather than referring to attendance I should have referred to the apparent lack of communication within their party.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We will return now to the original question. The hon. member for Calgary North has the floor for a supplementary question.

Mr. Woolliams: I would like to ask—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair has recognized the hon. member for Calgary North on a supplementary question.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister a question about the letters. Were all the letters between his department and the Auditor General in reference to the downgrading filed before the committee, and were there any personal conversations between the