

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That is, quite clearly, a representation—a forceful one, but a representation nevertheless.

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, this is a serious problem to which the minister should respond.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

STEPS TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT TO ASSIST MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. His department's study, entitled "Manufacturing Performance", released on Monday, states:

Manufacturing output remains no higher than it did in 1974 and the country has lost 80,000 manufacturing jobs.

In view of this, would the minister take the first opportunity on motions to outline to the House what he and his department are doing to pull the Canadian manufacturing industry out of its present nose-dive, and in that way start to overcome this country's \$11.5 billion trade deficit in manufactured products, the ones that produce jobs?

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): We are working on many fronts in an attempt to assist the growth of manufacturing in Canada. I should like to inform the hon. member and the House that last year our export of goods went up from \$38 billion to \$44 billion—a tremendous growth—and 65 per cent of that was the export of manufactured goods.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Horner: So we are both manufacturing and selling.

Mr. Hees: Is the minister not aware of the fact that our international trade deficit in manufactured goods increased from \$10.2 billion a year ago to \$11.5 billion a year later? If that is his idea of progress, I do not know what he thinks progress is. Does his answer not indicate the government is doing nothing, and is this not another good indication that the country is in a hell of a mess so far as trade in manufactured products is concerned?

Mr. Horner: In reply to that long-winded speech, Mr. Speaker, may I say that our exports have increased. We did have a surplus in total trade of nearly \$3 billion, which is a near record. With respect to manufactured goods, the hon. member keeps referring to \$11 billion. That is an end-product figure, and there is a difference between our exports and our imports. Our exports have increased, although not as fast as our imports.

Oral Questions

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

● (1452)

Mr. Horner: In no way do I believe we should limit the ability of Canadians to buy goods made in other countries.

Some hon. Members: Boo!

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

PROPOSALS GOVERNMENT PLACING BEFORE FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE TO IMPROVE ECONOMIC SITUATION

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. While he may prefer to procrastinate about an election or a budget, there are some things of immediate interest, namely, the first ministers' conference which is to take place next week.

In view of the fact that when the Prime Minister wrote to the first ministers on December 9, he said the objective would be to determine a medium-term economic strategy for Canada, in view of the fact that since then the economic situation has deteriorated considerably, and given that there are representations from members of the opposition and from the C. D. Howe Research Institute that the government take immediate action to cope with the unemployment situation, can the Prime Minister tell the House if he has any specific proposals to put before the first ministers as the first order of business, aimed at giving an immediate boost to the economy in order to deal with this winter's heavy unemployment?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the detailed agenda will be made public as soon as the premiers have agreed to it. I have been in contact with them about it. The hon. lady will see that one of the items deals with the economic situation as of now, and another is in the medium term.

As far as the hon. lady's repeated suggestion that we act on the C.D. Howe Research Institute's very recent recommendation is concerned, I repeat what I said earlier, that we have already done what the C.D. Howe Institute recommends we should do. If the hon. lady had been attentive, she would have seen that two of the important recommendations have been implemented. The first was that the provinces cut their sales tax. Let me remind the hon. lady that the Minister of Finance proposed to the provinces last October that they should cut their sales tax as recommended by the C.D. Howe Research Institute. In addition, the Minister of Finance made the offer to the provinces that we would pay half of that cut. Therefore, this recommendation is not new to us; it is something we have already attempted to do.

Mr. Basford: We invented it.

Mr. Trudeau: As the Minister of Justice says, we invented this idea and, as usual, the opposition is trying to climb on the band wagon.