

Oral Questions

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, the minister will know that at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, November 19, in a meeting with the Leader of the Opposition, in the leader's office, the minister's chief of staff, Jim Judd, the minister agreed to introduce enabling legislation for a national referendum. Among other things, the minister specifically agreed that House leaders would meet this week to agree on a timetable for the passage of enabling legislation for a referendum as soon as possible.

I ask the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs why he and the government House leader are denying that undertaking.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (President of the Privy Council and Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I rarely quote Christopher Young, but let me just quote a portion of his column of today when he says: Committee members "should remind themselves every morning that time wasted on party plots is time filched from the problems of hard-pressed farmers, industrial workers, fishermen and other decent citizens who elected them. Everywhere in Canada now the cry is heard that the constitutional issue must be settled and put behind us. Those who let temptations of partisan advantage stand in the way of that objective can expect to be harshly judged at election time".

• (1430)

I hope the hon. member will remember that.

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GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister.

He will recall that for many, many months we have advocated from our party that the government take action to launch an initiative to support the hard-pressed people in Montreal and other parts of Quebec. We are pleased to hear the government's announcement today that through a package of \$160 million it is going to ease some of the recessionary pain in that part of Canada.

Yesterday the government turned away farmers by saying there was no more money for them. Two days before Atlantic fishermen were told there was no more money for them. Last week the finance minister said there was no more money to assist children living in poverty in Canada.

What process does the government use when it determines where it sends out initiative packages to assist hard-pressed Canadians?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell my hon. friend from Kamloops that of the \$300 million package announced by two of my federal colleagues this morning, the Minister of National Health and Welfare and the Minister of State for Agriculture, and other Quebec ministers, \$160 million is federal funds coming from the reserves of the department in question. There will be no new taxes for this.

That is what we are trying to do to help the province of Quebec.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my follow-up question is for the minister responsible for western diversification.

The minister is aware that the Core Area Initiative in Manitoba is expiring, that the ACCESS program which provides educational opportunities for native people has expired and that all programs under the northern development agreement which provide infrastructure, employment and training in the part of Canada which has 23 per cent unemployment, the highest of any province of Canada, have expired.

Will the government act in Manitoba as it did in Quebec and provide funding and programs for that region?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, we have acted and will continue to act not only in Manitoba but right across the country, because we happen to be a national government. Where there is a need we attempt to address it.