

Oral Questions

Based on the reviews undertaken by the Department of Finance, the Department of Employment and Immigration, and by the various independent agencies that have reported to the Minister in a number of different ways, can he tell us what kind of target we can anticipate for the coming 12 months for the creation of new jobs?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Hon. Member that, in the year 1983, of the seven major industrial nations only two had a decline in unemployment. These were the United States and Canada. There were only two countries out of seven, and Canada was one of the two countries that reduced unemployment.

● (1430)

As far as the forecasts for next year are concerned, I have indicated to my hon. friend that these are part of budget plans and budget papers. I hope that when the budget papers are released he will find satisfaction in what he will read at that particular time. I am not in a position today to reveal those figures.

PLIGHT OF UNEMPLOYED BEREFT OF UNEMPLOYMENT
INSURANCE BENEFITS

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Finance. It is not reasonable to assume with all of the economic recovery that could possibly take place in the next 12 months that we could in any way imagine creating 1.3 million new jobs in Canada. Therefore, whatever the target figure turns out to be, it will be somewhat less than the total number of people who are presently unemployed. How does the Minister propose those people can live, pay their rents, pay their mortgages, and buy the food they need for their families, if they are to be left unemployed and without unemployment insurance benefits?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I recognize the validity of the first statement made by the Hon. Member. I appreciate his realism that there is no way this country will be able to create 1.5 million jobs in the space of 12 months. I am sure he regrets it, and I regret it. We have taken steps to create as many jobs as fast as we can. Once more, we have been creating jobs in Canada faster than any other industrial country. I hope we will keep that record in 1984.

As far as the problem the Hon. Member raises is concerned, he knows that through the recession Canada, of all countries, is the one country that has best kept the social safety nets, whether they be unemployment insurance, social assistance, special help and so forth for people who have difficulty paying mortgages—you name it. Most other countries, in fact practically all other countries, did cut the social benefits and the social safety nets during the recession. This country and this Government made sure that the safety nets were maintained, and we intend to do so again in 1984.

GOVERNMENT'S POSITION

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, the Minister can debate all he wants about the statistical information and what has been done by other countries over and against what we were able to accomplish. The fact is there will be tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of Canadians who, during the course of the next 12 months, will find themselves without the benefit of unemployment insurance payments, without a job and, therefore, without the necessary income to maintain themselves and their families. What precisely does the Government propose to do to ensure that those people, who through no fault of their own find themselves in economic jeopardy, will share, at least in some way, in the so-called economic recovery in which business is now sharing?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what I can add to what I have already said, namely, that of all the world's industrialized countries, Canada alone has maintained its social security system and has, in fact, improved it during the recession and since.

I can assure the Hon. Member that the next Budget will not make any cuts in the social security measures available to Canadians, and that if they can be improved, we shall continue to improve them. I understand the Hon. Member's concerns. I see his comments as an attempt to urge me to make any improvements I possibly can in the measures that provide Canadians in need with the support they require to be able to cope with their present difficulties and to go back to a steady, paying job. That is the objective the Government, I myself and all my colleagues are pursuing with the greatest possible energy.

I hope that the measures we shall be proposing will have the support of the Hon. Member, since the measures we implemented during the past year have proved to be effective, at least in protecting those Canadians in this country who are in greatest need.

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[English]

PUBLIC SERVICE

MISCLASSIFICATION OF POSITIONS

Hon. Ron Huntington (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the President of the Treasury Board. A leaked Treasury Board report completed in May last year indicates \$125 million a year was overpaid in wages and salaries because of misclassification. Treasury Board officials admit that since 1978 this problem has been getting progressively worse. Can the President of the Treasury Board tell us why the problem of misclassification has been allowed to increase, particularly through the period of six and five?