

Oral Questions

Constitutional negotiations in the past have led to a feeling of betrayal. If this betrayal of native people by the Liberal Government continues, the willingness of these peoples to work within the system will disappear altogether. Surely the Government would prefer to encourage and not to destroy the faith and trust of the native population.

Some Provinces, including the Province of British Columbia, have hidden agendas to include other items in the March Conference. While it cannot be denied that there are other important issues, in particular the position of the Province of Quebec, these should be made the subject of a separate First Ministers' meeting. To attempt to deal with a variety of issues at this time will result in a treatment that will not solve any issues for Canadians—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

REQUEST FOR ACTION TO CREATE JOBS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister who will know that the OECD study of 24 member nations revealed in terms of real growth last year that Canada ranked twenty-fourth out of 24; we ranked dead last. That means our problems are caused right here in Canada. Also the Prime Minister will know that the people who suffer most from those problems are the Canadian unemployed who now number nearly two million, and according to the Conference Board there will be at least another 141,000 Canadians who will lose their jobs this year.

The Government, three or four months ago, introduced the NEED Program which was supposed to create 60,000 jobs. So far, according to the Department of Employment and Immigration, it has created about 4,000 jobs. That is a shamefully inadequate response to a major Canadian crisis.

Will the Prime Minister indicate whether the Government intends to bring in immediately new action to create jobs for Canadians, when that action will be taken, and what form that action will take?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the NEED program which I announced in October and which is being implemented by the Minister of Employment and Immigration involves not just a \$500 million grant but also an additional amount of at least \$200 million to be provided by the provinces. My colleague has concluded agreements with all of the provinces and that program is now under way. Indeed, each week and each day new projects are being

undertaken. I am positive that we will exceed the 60,000 jobs referred to thanks to the co-operation of the provinces. In addition, Madam Speaker, I remind the Leader of the Official Opposition that several bills are now before this House, especially one dealing with the Income Tax Act which is being delayed. Passing this Bill would encourage Canadian businesses as well as Canadians into giving the economic impetus which we all need. Those bills are before Parliament and I hope that they will be considered as quickly as possible to help the unemployed and all those who would like to stimulate the Canadian economy.

[*English*]

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, let me express my apologies to the House. I could have sworn I saw the Prime Minister over there; I could have sworn that he had returned from vacation. I did not know that he was still goofing off and letting the Minister of Finance reply for him.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

LOSS OF JOBS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, let me ask whichever Minister is responding for the Government on economic policy—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: Let me try the Deputy Prime Minister; are you here?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition should proceed to his question.

● (1420)

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the Acting Prime Minister or any transient seat mate he might have, can call to mind that in October the Prime Minister indicated there would be bold new measures brought in by this Government to generate economic growth in the country, and that the House Leader indicated that the Throne Speech was already prepared with these bold new measures in it. Three months have passed since those declarations and thousands of Canadians have lost their jobs. Will the Acting Prime Minister tell us what the Government is waiting for? Why will the Government not act now to bring jobs and hope to Canadians who are losing their jobs by the thousands as this Government sits back and waits?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am surprised that the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition treats the question of unemployment in this country with such levity.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jarvis: Don't blush.