

Oral Questions

premiers of the provinces want to have one with me as first minister of the federal government, the intention is still there. I have just indicated that I will be visiting all the premiers in the next several weeks. I talked to them on Sunday about this possibility and they have agreed. Of course, in the course of my visits if it appears that we have to have a meeting before the end of this year, we will have one; if not, we will have one next year.

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INDUSTRY**CLOSING OF ALCAN PLANT IN ST. LAWRENCE,
NEWFOUNDLAND—GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. As the minister knows, the unemployment level in the province of Newfoundland has just recently reached the 1932 level, which was the depth of the great depression. As the minister also knows, the Alcan corporation which had profits of some \$85 million in the first six months of this year, has decided to shut down an operation in St. Lawrence which employs 175 people. Since the announced date of the shut down is February of next year, does the minister intend to take any action to stop the company from laying off people, which they have done now in advance, and from selling off parts of the property in the community to other businesses?

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, the government is fully aware of the problem Alcan presents to the province of Newfoundland and to Canada. We are trying to get together with the company to see whether the whole Newfoundland operation can be sold or the ownership change hands so that it can stay in business.

Mr. Broadbent: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Considering that in a speech made in the community in May of this year the Secretary of State for External Affairs promised that the government of Canada would bring all its moral pressure to bear on Alcan to stay in operation now, and since they have already begun to phase out, including layoffs, will the minister not take steps within the next 24 hours by getting on the telephone to the head of the corporation to say that the government of Canada recognizes the company made millions of dollars of profit in that community in recent years and so has an obligation to stop the shutdown immediately?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I have written a letter to the hon. member concerning this whole problem and have sent a copy of the letter to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. We are doing everything we can to keep that plant in operation.

Mr. Broadbent: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I have a copy of the letter which arrived from the minister this morning. There is no assurance whatever in that letter that the government is going to take immediate action to stop the company from moving out holus-bolus before a committee that he said has been set up to look into the situation can even

[Mr. Trudeau.]

make a recommendation. In view of the seriousness of the situation which will demoralize a whole town dependent for income on the company, will the minister take immediate action with the company to stop the shutdown pending the report from that committee?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, feldspar is an essential ingredient in the manufacture of aluminum. As the government of Canada, we have many ways of persuasion and we are doing everything possible to have that company remain in business in Newfoundland or to sell out to a Canadian company that will keep the plant in operation.

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● (1124)

[Translation]

REFERENDUMS**REQUEST FOR DETAILED STATEMENT ON POSSIBILITY OF
LEGISLATION**

Mr. Gilles Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Prime Minister. He indicated in his speech yesterday that legislation on a referendum could be passed. I would like to ask him whether the legislation would deal with the control of referendums or provide directions on referendums which could be held at other government levels or whether it would set forth a procedure to hold a referendum on the constitutional issue?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the answer to the first part of the question is no. We do not want to intervene in a legislation at the provincial level, but the federal government could hold a referendum on the matters which I have indicated in reply to the Leader of the Opposition, namely the fields related to the constitution or national unity.

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[English]

FINANCE**POSSIBILITY OF NEW BUDGET**

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. As the stock market, which is a very accurate barometer of business and investor confidence, has fallen by more than 10 per cent since the introduction of the last budget, is it the intention of this government to introduce a new budget in the very near future to try at least to restore confidence to the point where it was before the last budget was introduced or if possible, improve it further, and in that way rejuvenate the economy and make jobs available for people who need them?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member seems to think that Canadian budgets have very far reaching effects because the markets of