

*Oral Questions***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for International Financial Institutions.

It is being reported today that the secretary of state has said that the government will release an economic statement in September which will include spending cut announcements. Reformers have been demanding such action for months and wish to be assured that this statement accurately reflects the position of the government.

Do the remarks of the secretary of state mean that today the government is prepared to tell investors, taxpayers and lenders in clear language, yes, we will announce deeper spending cuts in September?

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions)): Mr. Speaker, the quote was not quite accurate. There was no promise or suggestion of a mini budget.

For the hon. member's knowledge I reiterated the budget promise made last February that an economic statement would be made this fall, as we promised, at the beginning of our consultation process with the people of Canada leading to the February 1995 budget.

If the hon. member had read the budget in February 1994 he would know that is not very much news. That is exactly what was said.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, these kinds of statements and the earlier statement just add to the mixed signals and the uncertainty to which the market is reacting.

This is the government's last chance before the summer recess, the last chance to stop dancing around on spending cuts and deficit reduction. It is the last chance to come down hard on the side of deeper spending cuts in order to cope with the deficit.

Is there anyone on the government side, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the finance minister, who is willing and prepared to commit the government to announcing deeper spending cuts in September?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, if the member wants to talk about confusion, I heard the leader of the third party last week saying that we needed a constitutional crisis to get the country back on track.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Copps: The only party that is so confused unfortunately is the party across the way that cannot get its act together.

[Translation]

FRANCOPHONE AND ACADIAN COMMUNITIES

Mr. Bernard Deshaies (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Recently, representatives from the minister's department met various organizations representing francophone and Acadian communities to confirm new cuts in federal subsidies and to try to make adjustments in the department's relations with these organizations.

However, the approach proposed by the department was judged to be unacceptable, and I would like to quote what was said by the spokesperson for the Coalition franco-ontarienne, in referring to the government's discussion paper: "We realized it failed to mention the issues we wanted to discuss. We want a comprehensive policy that respects the principles of the Charter".

Would the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who claims to defend the rights of francophones from the Atlantic to the Pacific, confirm that his discussion paper was rejected by the Coalition franco-ontarienne?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should set the record straight. It is not exactly news to say now that there are budget cuts. Of course there are budget cuts. Just read the last budget brought down by the finance minister.

The purpose of our dialogue with francophone communities is to see how we can decentralize our administration to give them more authority and a chance to identify their needs so they can better serve the communities they represent.

Mr. Bernard Deshaies (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, the spokesperson for the Coalition franco-ontarienne also said that the government was cutting down to the bone.

• (1440)

How can the minister make substantial cuts in subsidies to organizations that are out there to defend the interests of francophones, before deciding on a comprehensive development policy for francophone and Acadian communities, which is on the drawing board in his department?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): I do not think we have to undertake a fundamental review of this government's policies on official languages. These policies exist and they are being defended and explained, and I believe we will pursue them. What is on the drawing board today is how we can improve and add to these policies.