

Oral Questions

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the tricking stopped in 1984 when they were spending zero dollars on training.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, I want to correct myself. Maybe it was little bit more than zero but not much more. Maybe you could compare the numbers.

Anyway I invite the members to stay tuned. At twelve o'clock I will be tabling in this House the UI developmental use for the people in this country and they will have good news.

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THE ECONOMY

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

On October 10 the government announced a farm aid package of \$800 million. At that time the Minister of Finance warned that he would be continuing this government's policy of robbing from the poor to pay the desperate.

Today there are reports from his department that the minister is considering taxing Canadians who have been encouraged by the trade deal and the GST to make purchases in the United States. This government is considering putting a tax on those consumers.

The government has two choices: Further tax the consumers who are overburdened or close some of the corporate loopholes. I want to ask the Minister of Finance: Will he commit to take the other way and close some of those corporate loopholes like the \$1 billion free lunch program for businesses so we can pay for needed programs?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member would realize that it would be inappropriate for me to comment on any speculative stories about tax proposals. I did indicate at the time the \$800 million farm aid package was announced that it would have to be funded from within existing resources or tax measures or a combination of both, because I clearly indicated that increasing the deficit was not an option.

That is what I am looking at right now. Of course I will be pleased to entertain any suggestions by the hon. member or any other hon. members. But her suggestion

may not find favour with representatives of the restaurant association so she may want to check with them before she advances that proposal.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, the question here is who pays and what is the fair method of doing this.

I want to remind government members that it is their policies. If they look at Statistics Canada they will see that since the GST has come in, purchases in the United States have gone up 215 per cent. There is a direct link between this government's policies and what is happening in terms of cross-border purchasing.

I want to ask the minister again: Will he look at fair tax reform, close those loopholes for the powerful and wealthy, make sure that the people who should be paying are paying, and stop overburdening the middle income consumer who cannot pay any more taxes?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, of course I am interested in fairness in the taxation system and fairness in spreading the burden among all Canadians.

The hon. member was blaming cross-border shopping on the GST and cited figures going back to 1988. The GST came into effect in 1991, not 1988. I think she will agree with me that my predecessor closed a number of loopholes with respect to corporate taxation. If she has some further suggestions of course I would be glad to look at them.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, three days ago, this government established the prosperity secretariat. I say to the minister that it is not necessary to spend \$20 million to ask Canadians: Who should start paying the nation's bills?

Can the minister assure the workers of this country that they will not face any new taxes as long as the wealthy enjoy tax breaks?

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's sensitivity about new taxes. I think that all Canadians share that view. I would hope that they would consider that when they continually ask the federal government to spend more money, because if you are going to spend more money on programs there are only two sources from which you can get it. You either impose