

Oral Questions

Time and time again they place political strategy ahead of parliamentary procedure and have shown no respect for the House.

• (1430)

They seem to think that polls give them a blank cheque to do as they please. I have news for this leak infested government. Reform MPs are tired of its arrogance and it is starting to wear thin on Canadians too.

Will the government investigate this process of leaking proposals and reports before they are even tabled in the House? Will it take the appropriate and necessary action?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the point is being missed here. Most of the matters I have seen reported in the newspapers today were matters which were debated and discussed in various fora over quite a number of months. In many ways what we see today is the culmination of many months of consultation, of discussion and of thought which have been engaged in among members of Parliament as well as in the House.

I know the member is concerned about this because he recognizes the strategic importance of this document. I hope for that reason he will take the opportunity afforded to him to study it, to read it, to make further suggestions. I believe it plays an important part in the gradual unfolding of an active government policy on economic development in Canada.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL PROGRAM REFORM

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

More than two months after he tabled his working paper on social program reform and two weeks before the public consultations end, the minister has tabled only four of the nine technical papers that are to lay out the directions of his plan. This delay suggests the worst, especially as far as education and welfare are concerned.

In view of the urgency of making all the relevant information public, so that a real debate can take place on this reform which will directly affect millions of Quebecers and Canadians, how does the minister justify this delay?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the rest of the papers will be tabled publicly within the next 10 days.

[Translation]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the minister not agree that this delay and the lack of information in the papers already tabled, as the Auditor General pointed out, are because the minister has gone ahead with this reform blindly, just so that he can make the cuts required by the Minister of Finance?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that may be the case but I just read a large scale national survey this week. It showed that 96 per cent of Canadians believe major changes have to be made in social policy. It may be that the hon. member does not understand but 96 per cent of Canadians are in favour of what we are doing.

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GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry. It appears the industry strategy seems to be one of shuffling money around, not reduction in spending. Yet this morning the Minister of Industry stated on "Canada A.M." that his departmental budget would be reduced by as much as 50 per cent by the end of the third year. That is two years from now or less than that.

Can the minister tell us specifically what will be cut?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not disclose that. As the member knows we are involved in an ongoing process of program review which is in effect, as the Prime Minister announced in September in Quebec City, a basic review of each and every program in every department and agency of the Government of Canada from bottom up.

I believe this review is important. It is a vital part of our own plan in order to achieve our objective of reaching 3 per cent of GDP as the level of the deficit by the third year of the mandate. In the industry department we are prepared to make the changes that, as the member indicates, will result in an overall budget decrease of almost 50 per cent by the third year of the mandate.

• (1435)

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the answer I expected the minister to give.

I think it is about time that we get down to some specifics rather than these generalizations. It has been very clear that Canadian business has said the best way for government to create a competitive environment is to reduce taxes. Yet there is no such statement in the industrial strategy.