

Supply

● (1750)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time for questions and comments has now terminated. Debate.

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, the spending Estimates of the Government reflect priorities which are dangerously confused and mischievous. The Tories ask, of course, what our priorities are. I suggest that what should concern them, especially because they are the Government, and what should concern us as our highest priority as a nation is the maintenance of our independence, culture and sovereignty. I suggest that what should concern the Government above all is our ability to compete in a very competitive world market where technology and productivity based on research and a highly educated and flexible population are vital. I would suggest that a very high priority for the Government should be to ensure that our future is one of greatness and hope in a country where Canadians from all regions will have the same opportunities.

The Government is spending over \$116 billion of taxpayers' money, but in all that spending it is holding back on our research, our future research and on the kind of education we must have to be able to compete in a trade war which goes on throughout the world. The Government is holding back on our youth and on our Canadian heritage and certainly holding back in terms of our future. If some foreign agents were to report on how to undermine and destroy Canada, they could not come up with a better plan than this Government's approach to our youth, our educational system and our research. If the Government had not proven its total incompetence already in a host of areas, one would think we were in the hands of our enemies.

The Conservatives promised before they were elected that they would ensure that these areas of which I am speaking, research, competitiveness and productivity, would be their main concern. They promised they would build on this and it would be our strength. Instead, practically the first thing the Conservatives did upon coming to power, in the name of economy and cutting back on the deficit, was to cut our future. When the Tories were asked by the Canadian Association of University Teachers what their intentions were, if they were elected, with respect to transfers from the federal Government to the provinces, the Tories replied in an official statement: "We are committed to sustaining the current federal financial commitment according to the formula set out in the 1977 agreement". Quite understandably, the Association of University Teachers suspected that politicians might be speaking out of both sides of their mouths and in order to nail them to the wall, the Association asked them a second question: "Does your Conservative Party support the continuation of the established programs financing Act in its present form in so far as it deals with post-secondary education?" The Tories replied: "Yes, we support fully the original 1977 funding formula and the legislation provided for it". In the

spending Estimates we find that the Tories have broken that promise, torn it up into shredded paper. The promise was not worth the paper it was written on. In Bill C-96 the Government proceeded to break that formula it promised solemnly in the two answers I just quoted. Those answers, I might add, came from the Leader of the Conservatives, now the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), through Members of Parliament saying that the Government would not change the formula but would continue to support post-secondary education along the lines of the formula already laid down. The Government broke that promise. It not only broke the promise but what is worse, it broke the agreement established between the federal and provincial Governments which is to expire in March, 1987. The Government not only broke its promise that it would not change the formula but even it broke the agreement with respect to the existing formula made by a previous Government. One would think that members of the Government would be very embarrassed by all that. However, they have explained it away by saying: "We had to do it for the sake of the deficit; we had to cut the deficit".

● (1800)

That is totally misleading the Canadian people because the deficit is not being cut. The cuts are being placed on to the backs of the provinces. It is the provinces which now have to try to make up for the cuts that the federal Government has imposed upon them. Government Members have broken their promises to teachers, students and to the provinces. They have solved their deficit problems by putting them on to the backs of the provinces. That is not a solution; it is just plain cavalier. It is misleading and dishonest.

They also promised that they would uphold the formula for post-secondary education. They made such promises in various speeches. For example, the Hon. Member for Brandon—Souris (Mr. Clark) said that we need more consultation with the provinces and the development of a national education strategy. He said that above all we must understand that this is not the time to reduce in any way the vital resources which the federal Government has been transferring to the provinces. That is the type of speech made by the Prime Minister and members of his Party when they wanted to be elected before the last election. They have broken their promises and their agreements.

I believe it is important for us to understand that not only did they make promises in areas regarding our future and broke them, but they also promised more research and development. One of the major concerns we have as a nation in a competitive and technological age is to have good research and development. At the present time our country is not at the level promised by the Tories; that is, 2.5 per cent of GNP in regard to research and development. Rather, it is around 1.3 per cent, about half of what the Tories promised it would be. No advances are being made in terms of research and development. In fact, we are going backward. While Japan, France, Germany and the United States are at the 2.5 per cent level, Canada is still at the level of 1.3 per cent. Japan is considering