

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why when he gets to quoting *The Financial Post* he is so selective. Surely he could have been a little more careful and quoted the relevant part of the statement by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Tobin: Pretty relevant.

Mr. Mulroney: Pardon? My hon. friend said pretty relevant. Let me read what the Minister of Finance said which my hon. friend no doubt inadvertently neglected to quote.

The Minister of Finance said: "At the present time I am preparing what is the equivalent of a budget. Cabinet will consider a budget-economic statement". That is exactly what he is going to do. He is consulting, he is preparing a budget, it will be brought to cabinet, cabinet will consider the matter and the House will be fully seized of the plans of the government.

I can assure my hon. friend that it will not deal with matters such as took place when my hon. friends were in government, when interest rates went to 22.75 per cent, when inflation went to 12.9 per cent and unemployment was 11.8 per cent. They devastated Canada with a national energy program. It will never, ever happen again with this government.

[Translation]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. We know that the ministers who are seeking the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party all have different views as far as the budget is concerned, but their main concern is for their own jobs, not the jobs of Canadians. However, 1.5 million Canadians are waiting impatiently for a budget that will restore their hope in the future.

I want to ask the Prime Minister to tell the House and Canadians today whether they can expect a federal budget within the next few weeks.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the answer is still the same. As I told the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, considering the importance of these major economic issues, perhaps the hon. member from Hamilton would care to speak to her leader and ask him once again where he stands on the GST. Does he support it, yes or no? Does he support the

free trade agreement, yes or no? Then, if the Minister of Finance brings down a budget, perhaps for once the Leader of the Opposition will rise in the House and give us a straight answer.

[English]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister wants us to put forward a budget. Just tell him to have the guts to call an election.

• (1440)

It is obvious that the Prime Minister is playing politics with the lives of hundreds of thousands of Canadians. It is obvious that his only interest right now is in crowning his successor as opposed to reaching out to—

Mr. Speaker: Just a minute. We are getting unnecessarily personal. Would the hon. member lay the basis for her question and put it.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I do take the fact that there are 1.6 million Canadians looking for work in this country rather personally. I just wish the Prime Minister did.

I want to ask the Prime Minister very directly—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Some hon. members: Order.

Ms. Copps: I want to ask the Prime Minister this. Given that his own Minister of Finance is asking Canadians to tighten their belts, will he tighten his belt and abolish a helicopter program that is going to cost every single Canadian taxpayer \$400?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend says that she takes the unemployment figures personally, as she should. Unemployment today is about a full percentage point lower than where it was when she was a member of the outgoing government.

Ms. Copps: You're wrong—

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. friend says that I am wrong. The numbers are there. She can check them.

Ms. Copps: I wasn't in the outgoing government.

Mr. Mulroney: You were a supporter of the outgoing government.