

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Young (Gloucester):** —my question for Captain Steroid is this, although it is addressed to the Minister of Finance.

Yesterday, in reply to a question I asked the Minister, if he implied that the provinces should take up the slack in providing help to the unemployed, the poor, senior citizens and the sick because the provinces had managed their affairs better than the federal Government had managed its own affairs.

Based on the Minister's experience in the last four years, what does he believe the provinces should do, raise their taxes, their deficits, or cut programs?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Member does not watch what he calls me, I may go into a telephone booth and take off my shirt.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Peterson:** Michael, you have stripped every other Canadian, you should do it to yourself.

**Ms. Clancy:** Anything but that!

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** Mr. Speaker, in response to the question I point out to the Hon. Member that total transfers to the provinces are some \$34 billion. Cash transfers represent 23 per cent of our spending.

It is very important when we look at the over-all problem of the government debt—and I am sure the Hon. Member agrees that we do have a problem with the Government debt—that we look at this as an element of the measures that we take in addressing that problem. That is why we have included some elements of those government transfers.

He also understands that we have not changed equalization. The equalization program is exactly the same as it was before. That is important, particularly to provinces like his own.

**Mr. Young (Gloucester):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly would not want to leave the impression that I addressed the Minister of Finance as Captain Steroid. I reserve that for the Minister of Youth who is very familiar with the subject.

**Mr. Charest:** And he is the MP for haemorrhoids.

**Mr. Young (Gloucester):** I want to tell the Minister he should start to wonder about putting Preparation H right around his lips.

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE****PROGRAM FINANCING—GOVERNMENT'S POSITION**

**Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester):** Mr. Speaker, before the Budget was tabled in this House, Canadian workers and the unemployed were advised that they had to shoulder the burden of training and retraining. We are talking here about the most disadvantaged segment of our society. My question to the Deputy Prime Minister is the following: Now that the Canadian Government has completely withdrawn from the unemployment insurance program, will it continue to manage it only until it is privatized or until the provinces, as Québec indicated yesterday for example, take up the slack? Is it the strategy of the Canadian Government to withdraw entirely from everything that has to do with the unemployment insurance program throughout the country?

**Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration) and Minister of State (Seniors)):** Mr. Speaker, the unemployment insurance reform announced two weeks ago prepares us for the challenge of the labour market in the year 2000. Having said that, I can assure you that this Government will continue to manage the unemployment insurance fund and to help out should financial difficulties arise. That is what we have done since 1980 and our Government knows how to take its responsibilities.

[*English*]

**REDUCTION OF SERVICES**

**Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester):** Mr. Speaker, the Budget has indicated to Canadians that we are reducing the commitment of the national Government to eliminating regional disparity. No matter how it is sliced, the people who have analysed the Budget have discovered that we are going to have to consider cutting hospital beds and reducing services. The provinces are going to be asked to become more and more the players. They have managed their affairs so well, according to the Minister of Finance, that now they have to pick up the slack.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is this: Is the only role of the national Government, as a result of its Conservative agenda, to make sure that there are two kinds of Canadians, those who live in the areas that have low unemployment and very, very strong provincial Governments, and that other areas of the province that have high unemployment and are faced with high interest rates going to have to scramble and survive on their own? In other words, is the agenda of this Government