

The Budget—Mr. MacLaren

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that 40 per cent of the 1.5 million people who are unemployed are the unemployed youth, given the fact that 300,000 or 400,000 young people in the next few weeks will have completed their university or high school year and will be looking for work, and given the fact that last summer a very high percentage of the students did not get work, which had a very adverse effect on their continuing education, would the Hon. Member indicate to me if he has any figures on the percentage of university and high school students who will be looking for work and will not find work this summer; and will he indicate why the Government has not taken steps to put them to work rather than forcing them to be unemployed for the rest of the summer?

Mr. MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, the Summer Canada Program has in fact been greatly expanded. The announcements made by the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) the other day would, I believe, answer in part the question put by the Hon. Member opposite, who evidently is unaware of those initiatives. In addition, with regard to the inability of students to earn the necessary funds by summer employment to assist them in their further education, there is provision in the budget for improvements in the Students Loans Program of the federal Government as well as the continuing grants to universities. There is also provision for increased support for unemployed youth.

Finally, as I mentioned during my statement, there is additional support for training and retraining to supplement that which is already available. As I mentioned, over 250,000 people, half of them young people, will benefit from that program alone during the course of this year.

Mr. Domm: Mr. Speaker, I was impressed with a point in the statement of the Hon. Member for Etobicoke North that we really have to rely on investment in the private sector if we are going to turn our economy around. Does the Hon. Member not feel it might be more advantageous to consider doing away with that \$3.5 billion tax at the gas pumps which is there so that the Government can intervene more in the marketplace by the acquisition of private companies? Would it not be better if that \$3.5 billion tax which is now in the budget was not there so that the money could be left in the hands of consumers rather than turning it over to the Government? Does the Hon. Member not agree, Mr. Speaker, that that is the way to turn the economy around? We should not give more money to the Government to spend, but rather we should rely on the private sector to turn the economy around.

Mr. MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, I suppose that theoretically, if one had the assurance that equivalent funds would in fact be invested by the private sector in such a way as to enhance Canadian participation in the petroleum industry, one could forgo that tax. The problem in the past, however, has been that in an industry dominated by foreign multinational corporations, there has been a limited opportunity to do this. The opportunity for investment by Canadians has gradually grown but not at a sufficient rate for junior Canadian companies to expand substantially and more generally for the Canadian

people, whether through private or public sector vehicles, to take a greater part in their own petroleum industry. I am satisfied that the charge is indeed necessary to do just that, to assist the private Canadian investor, and indeed the Canadian people generally, through the national oil corporation, Petro-Canada, financed in part by the charge, to have a greater opportunity to participate.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Hon. Member a question which relates to the issue of youth unemployment. The Hon. Member just a few moments ago referred to the Youth Internship Program, or the training program, and the Wage Subsidy Program which totals some \$95 million over the next two years. The fact of the matter is that we have some 500,000 young Canadians who will be leaving school this year, within the next couple of months, looking for their first full-time job. If you spread that \$95 million over just those 500,000, it works out to something like \$190 apiece. How can the Hon. Member say we can really expect much improvement in youth unemployment with that kind of figure?

• (1250)

Mr. MacLaren: I do not recall saying that, Mr. Speaker. If the Hon. Member opposite wants to come to my constituency office on a Saturday morning, he, too, would realize the degree to which youth unemployment is a major problem. I do not belittle that problem. What I do say is that the Government is acting to address that profoundly disturbing social and economic problem partly through short-term and partly through long-term measures.

The Hon. Member refers to one of several short-term initiatives which the Government has taken to reduce youth unemployment. There will be youth unemployment this summer. It will continue at a high level. The Government does not have the capability—how could we—of guaranteeing every youth a job this summer. What we are attempting to do is alleviate some of the worst difficulties involved, to help channel young people into the more promising areas of the economy, to assist with training in both the short and longer term.

There are specific measures into which I could go in some detail, but I believe that the Hon. Member opposite recognizes at least some. He has mentioned one. They can bring real relief to youth unemployment; but over the longer run the only real answer is the restoration of a dynamic private sector economy, both in Canada and abroad, so as to provide jobs for all those who seek them.

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand up and speak on this budget. When I hear the speech of the Hon. Member for Etobicoke North (Mr. MacLaren) I was reminded of Little Red Ridinghood. If the wolf were at the door I think the Liberals would give Little Red Ridinghood a grant if she cried out, or a tax credit over four years. Worse still, after much consultation with the wolf community, the Government would give the wolf a grant so it could be more efficient.