

Oral Questions

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Madam Speaker, the facts do not support the hon. member's comment.

In 1990-91, Newfoundland, in transfers to the province, received \$1,000,376,000, about 44 per cent of its total budget by the way.

In 1991-92, it is going to receive \$1,434,000,000. That is an increase, not a decrease. I do not know where the hon. member is getting this decrease from.

It was interesting to read the comments of the premier of the province of Newfoundland and the finance minister. I might say the minister of finance congratulated the Minister of Finance for Canada for the budget that he brought in.

Newfoundland is getting more money next year than this year. I am not sure what figures the member is looking at, but he had better get a new researcher.

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UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Madam Speaker, my question is to the real boss, the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada.

As a fellow westerner, I am sure he has noticed now that the recession is real in western Canada, with pockets of unemployment of up to 15 per cent or 20 per cent. The city of Saskatoon has a rate now of 11.8 per cent.

What I want to ask him, as the Deputy Prime Minister of this country, is the following. Does he have the courage to phone up the Governor of the Bank of Canada, John Crow, and instruct the governor to roll back interest rates in this country so that they are more in line with the bank rates in the United States? There is now a 4 per cent gap and that gap should not be more than 2 per cent. Does he have the courage, as the Deputy Prime Minister, to phone John Crow and say, roll back the interest rates so we can export more from the west and create jobs for western Canadians?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): One of the good news stories, if you can find it in the employment figures today, Madam Speaker, is that employment actually rose in Alberta last month. So there is some growth in employment in the west.

There are other areas, and the hon. member is right, there are pockets of high unemployment out west and we are very concerned about that, there is no question about that. But as to just automatically rolling back interest rates, it just does not work that way. The hon. member was another one who was on his feet demanding a 2 per cent roll back and now they have been rolled back 4 per cent.

The hon. member should know full well that we have lowered interest rates to get the economy going again.

The hon. member talks about gaps. Let us just take a look at those gaps because he has got to get his statistics right.

The prime rate in the United States is 9 per cent; in Canada it is 11-1/4 per cent. That is a 2-1/4 per cent difference in the prime rate, which is not too bad.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. minister has answered the question. We will go on and let as many members as possible have the floor.

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AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Madam speaker, yesterday we learned that an air traffic controller at Halifax International Airport had to shut down the tower to take a nap. Today, I have learned that five air traffic positions at Pearson International Airport in Toronto are being cut to save money in overtime.

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister, the father of deregulation in the transportation sector in this country: Why is his government prepared to put human life at risk to save a buck?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the hon. member's allegation is a distortion of the facts. I am not aware of all the circumstances surrounding the incident in Halifax. If the hon. member is aware of them, then perhaps he might want to give us the facts.

There are two points to the question. Insofar as the Halifax incident is concerned, the Minister of Transport is in fact investigating this. Obviously, if the air traffic controller was not fit to be on duty, he did the proper thing. But the facts would have to be recognized.