

Oral Questions

● (1435)

Mr. Cliff Breitkreuz (Yellowhead, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister stands here and gives his version of the facts while officials recently told the media that Winnipeg receives a disproportionate amount of funds, even more than I stated in my report. No matter how we slice it, western economic diversification is largely about pork barrelling.

Is the minister willing to dismantle the department to show Canadian people that he will put the nation's finances ahead of his own pork barrel agenda?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to point out the old adage that figures never lie but liars use figures—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Many times in the past we have quoted great writers. I would ask the hon. minister if he would withdraw the word "liars" used in that context. Would you please withdraw that word.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, seeing that it is a saying I learned at my mother's knee, I would certainly not want to have it refer to that specific member. I was using it as a general philosophical saying.

The Speaker: My colleagues, we cannot go from quoting great writers to our mothers' lullabies. Would the minister withdraw forthwith.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I certainly withdraw any specific reference or any interpretation that the hon. member was a liar.

I will seek to refer to Bartlett's quotations—

The Speaker: Perhaps the hon. minister would go directly to his answer.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, just to answer the hon. member directly, I would first point out that in this past year, if one looks at the geographical allocation which of course we do not do because we have been promoting a strategy that tries to look at projects on a pan-western basis to benefit all regions, the province of British Columbia received close to 50 per cent of all funding coming from western diversification.

One member alone who happens to be a Reform Party member received upward of \$37 million in one grant. He takes the cake for having the largest allocation of any member. I congratulate the hon. member for his effectiveness. However, when we make city to city comparisons, I would also like to say to the regret of my Manitoba colleagues the city that benefited most per capita from investment from western economic diversification was the

great Queen city of Saskatchewan. I compliment the members of that area.

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[Translation]

UNITED STATES ENTRANCE FEE

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. By proposing in its budget to levy a tax or entrance fee of \$3 per vehicle and \$1.50 per person entering the United States, the American government stirred up unanimous opposition in Canada and in Quebec, where such a tax is felt to be utterly contrary to the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us how the U.S. government reacted to the protest made by Canada through its embassy in Washington?

● (1440)

[English]

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the House yesterday, we have raised this issue with the United States trade representative. We did so last week and we have done so more formally with the State Department. Our protests have been duly noted, but the response has been generally that the proposed measure has no chance of passing through the U.S. Congress.

Indeed it was only today that U.S. Senator Gramm of Texas said the proposal was as dead as Elvis Presley.

Some hon. members: He is alive, Roy.

The Speaker: It is always easier for me if I can see the person's face when the response is over.

[Translation]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think the Governor General's cocktail party has gone to some people's heads.

However, I would like the minister to get up again and tell us what retaliatory measures he intends to take if the U.S. government insists on imposing a tax which would affect Canadians crossing the border? I want the minister to answer like a man.

[English]

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question is hypothetical to a degree.

We do not anticipate that this tax will be imposed. If it were to be, there may be measures we can take to respond to such an action on the part of the United States government.

I would say again to the member opposite that it is our impression it is most unlikely that proposed tax will be applied.