

*Oral Questions*

**Mrs. McDougall:** It will not help one of those people, and that is why this is hypocritical.

**Some hon. members:** VER.

**Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor):** Mr. Speaker, we have all enjoyed the jokes from the Prime Minister, the rants from the Minister of Finance, but none of these can take away from the fact that the Conference Board of Canada said quite clearly today and I quote: "Canadians will see no gains in their real disposable income in 1991."

This Minister of Finance has been voted the worst minister of finance—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Let's try to put the question.

**Mr. Langdon:** Is the minister prepared finally to admit that the country is in a recession? Will he admit that it is a made-in-Canada recession for which he is responsible, and will he tell the country what he intends to do about it?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I can take my hon. friend back to the budget of 1989 and 1990, where I said very clearly that we had inflationary pressures that we had to get under control. Those inflationary pressures were caused by the very strong growth that we had during the 1984-1988 period, during which time we saw an increase in personal disposable income after taxes and after inflation of 14 per cent.

It is a natural progression in an economy when there is that fast a growth, that there has to be a slowdown. I clearly predicted that in my budget of 1990 when I said: "This will be a testing year for the Canadian economy. The economic news will not be encouraging in the months ahead." We have been very open and honest with Canadians.

We are getting the inflationary problems under control. As we have been getting them under control, we have been bringing interest rates down. As this continues to happen, we are setting the stage for strong non-inflationary growth which, as the Conference Board of Canada projects, will start in the second quarter of next year.

**Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor):** I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. There is a big difference between slow growth and no growth: decline.

That is what the government has given the country, economic decline.

Will the Minister finally start to care about Canadians—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Langdon:** —and will he demonstrate this by leading our House to adopt immediately the variable entrance requirements for unemployment insurance for fishing communities right across the country?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I have made it very clear that what we are going through right now gives me no pleasure whatsoever—

**Mr. Tobin:** Well, quit doing it.

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** —but I do know, if we do not have a period of time when we get these inflationary pressures under control, then we will go through the same sort of mess that we went through in 1981-82. I am sure my hon. friend does not want to go through that.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** What my hon. friend is ignoring when he talks about one aspect of the unemployment insurance reform bill, the variable entrance requirement, is the fact that we are improving maternity benefits. We are adding some \$500 million to \$700 million worth of moneys for training of people who are out of a job. We are putting moneys to allow people over the age 65 who want to continue in the workforce to continue to have the support and benefit of an unemployment insurance.

These are the things that are hung up in that bill on the other side. His party is supporting the Liberal senators to continue to hold up that bill. That, Mr. Speaker, we say is dead wrong.

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[*Translation*]

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Mrs. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the minister who is responsible for corporate losses in Canada and who is well aware that yesterday Air Canada cut 3,000 jobs. Hardly half an hour ago, the Canadian National Railways announced an additional loss of 1,500 jobs throughout Canada, including 750 in the City of Montreal. For the past 5 months,