

Oral Questions

want to work as opposed to being idle, and that is what we are providing them with.

Mr. Wilson: Madam Speaker, the Minister did not answer the question. The question was: will the Government propose permanent job creation programs as opposed to short-term alphabet-soup programs, which the Minister just admitted that is what it has been doing.

CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION PROPOSAL ON CAPITAL COST ALLOWANCES

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, recently the Canadian Construction Association, in its pre-budget submission, indicated that it was anticipating a further decline of some 60,000 jobs in 1983 over and above a huge drop in jobs in 1982.

Does the Minister agree with the proposals of the Construction Association, which have also been made by the Conservative Party of Canada, to reinstate the capital cost allowance, to reverse the change in the tax regime for the small business community, and to introduce incentives to encourage construction exports, all of which will increase jobs?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, while we are on the subject of developing long-term jobs in the construction area, I would suggest to the Hon. Member for Etobicoke Centre that he speak to many Members of his own caucus. The Minister of Transport put forward a proposal some two weeks ago which would provide some 350,000 new person-years of jobs in the country in this decade. It would start close to \$800 million worth of construction in this year alone, provided that we are able to obtain full support for the legislation to modernize the railway system. Yet all we hear from Members on his side is delay, conflict and opposition. If the Hon. Member is really interested in getting work going, I suggest that he tell his caucus Members to come on board, support that legislation, and get those jobs going.

● (1120)

Mr. Wilson: The Minister is pulling things out of the air. We are looking for specific proposals from the Government to address the problem of job loss. The 60,000 job-loss figure that the Construction Association has pointed to, takes these things into account, and they still need more. That is what we are requesting.

DROP IN EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, for the past two or three years the Government has continually blamed the problems of high unemployment on the international recession. However, employment in the United States has dropped by some 1.9 per cent while it has dropped by three times that amount in Canada on a proportionate basis; 5.3 per cent in the last year. How does the Minister explain this substantially worse performance to the 1.6 million people who

are out of a job and have seen their lives devastated by this abysmal performance?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, again I am afraid that the Hon. Member has been somewhat loose and easy with his reporting to the House on what in fact has taken place. I think it would be foolish for anyone in the House to try to suggest that Canada is not part of a world-wide recession.

Mr. Wilson: I never did. I said, why worse?

Mr. Axworthy: For Members opposite to try to suggest and to continue this foolishness of saying that somehow only Canada is being affected by this recession, simply will not wash. I think that Canadians know better. I believe they understand that the problems we face are being faced by everyone, whether the United States, Great Britain, or France.

What we do point out when we talk realistically to Canadians—not the exaggerated nonsense we hear from that Hon. Member—is that we in fact have put in place in this country, contrary to what the Americans have done, a major program of unemployment insurance that extends for a full 52 weeks, and a number of specific job creation programs for which we will spend over a billion dollars this year to provide well over 150,000 jobs for Canadians. There are a number of other initiatives as well. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, there are many Americans who would be very happy if their Government were bringing in the kind of initiatives that this Government is introducing.

SKILLS GROWTH FUNDS—PURCHASE OF AMERICAN MANUFACTURED EQUIPMENT

Mr. John Bosley (Don Valley West): Madam Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. It is with regard to the enforcement of the "Buy Canadian" provisions of his Skills Growth Fund. It is supplementary to a question asked by the Hon. Member for St. Catharines on Monday. Why has he allowed Niagara College to place purchase orders for American-made welding equipment for training purposes when suitable Canadian equipment that fully met his "Buy Canadian" provisions was tendered to the College by the Lincoln Electric Company of Canada?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to answer that particular question and to clear up the confusion in the Hon. Member's mind. As he should know, the jurisdiction over community colleges is very much a provincial Government authority. Our Skills Growth Fund is established as a direct grant to enable community colleges, non-profit groups or business groups to modernize their training facilities. The decisions made by those organizations must be authorized by their provincial authorities.

In the particular case in question, it was drawn to my attention that, while we established the basic standard that the sourcing of new training equipment should be of Canadian