

going to continue the consultative process. Consultations did not stop on May 23. We will continue with them for future Budgets that the Government will be bringing down. Yes, we will be flexible, but we do believe that the new approach that we set out in a clear break from the past is the right approach, and we are going to give it a good chance to work.

REQUEST FOR CHANGES TO BUDGET

Hon. William Rompkey (Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador): Mr. Speaker, we cannot wait for future Budgets. This Budget will cripple the Atlantic area for the next four years. The *Evening Telegram* also reported the following about the Minister of Justice:

He admitted the private sector in the Atlantic area is weaker than other parts of the country and said there will have to be more government support—

The Minister of Finance has cut that government support. Will he change the Budget? Will he stop the cruel and devastating effect this is having on the Atlantic area?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Ouellet: Order. The question is to the Minister of Finance. He cannot answer.

Mr. Crosbie: They are afraid.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Minister of Justice has the capacity to answer as the Hon. Minister of Justice on a justice matter.

Mr. Ouellet: It's not a justice matter.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ouellet: This is a budget matter.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: For some reason I cannot hear. The microphones must be off.

Mr. Rompkey: Mr. Speaker, the question was directed to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Copps: It's a budget matter, not a justice matter.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I take it that the Hon. Minister of Justice is now trying to answer a question in his capacity as Acting Minister of Fisheries?

Mr. Crosbie: Yes.

Mr. Broadbent: No, it's a budget question.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Crosbie: I am versatile, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: I now recognize the Hon. Member for Laurier.

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[Translation]

CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

CLOSING OF PATENT OFFICE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. David Berger (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Since yesterday I have had several conversations with the President of the Canadian Patent Institute who stated that closing the Patent Office would deprive Canada of a tool essential for Canadian industry as a whole as well as for innovation, economic growth and employment opportunities. As he told me, we will soon rank among the banana republics.

Can the Minister confirm that closing the Patent Office is indeed Government policy? Can he tell us whether a cost-profit analysis was made, and would he be prepared to table that study?

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, indeed we are aware of the recommendations of the task force chaired by my colleague, Mr. Nielsen. We are interested in examining the conditions of Canada's ratification of the Patent Co-operation Treaty with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts by various countries when examining patents.

The task force considered and analyzed the advisability of Canada proceeding this way, and we endorse this measure.

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● (1500)

PATENTS

REQUEST FOR DETAILS CONCERNING CLOSING OF PATENT OFFICE

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the same Minister.

Dismantling the Patent Office will mean a loss of 200 jobs in the Public Service. Can the Minister inform the House whether he has consulted with the unions and whether these employees will be dealt with on the basis of relocation? Will they benefit under the measures provided by the Public Service Commission . . . Can the Minister inform the House today exactly when the Office is to be closed and why?

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I repeat once again that the Government is anxious to provide the best possible service at the lowest possible cost. As far as the Hon. Member's questions