

*Oral Questions***IRVING WHALE**

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

After hearing the hon. member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, can the minister assure this House today that refloating the Irving Whale, the barge that sank off the coast of the Magdalen Islands in 1970, does not pose an environmental threat to Magdalen Islands fishermen and residents?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was expecting this question from the official opposition, but since it was not forthcoming—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Copps: I just wanted to remind hon. members that the first report proposing salvage measures, proposed in 1989, was rejected by the then Minister of the Environment.

I am very pleased to report that, since we came to power, 24 years after the incident occurred and six years after the first report was presented to the former environment minister—the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean—action will finally be taken this spring. We have opted for the alternative that was the least expensive and the safest for the residents of the Magdalen Islands and Prince Edward Island.

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[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Liberals seem to have different rules for Canada's elite. Last night it was reported that children of diplomats and senior military officials were attending expensive private schools all around the world and the taxpayers were footing the bill for this extravagance.

Will the government commit to immediately bringing this benefit in line with similar benefits in the private sector?

• (1440)

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): The answer, Mr. Speaker, is that we do exactly that. It is quite clear that the children of those serving abroad have to attend schools that follow a curriculum which will allow them to continue their classes when they come back to Canada.

Canadian diplomats are receiving nothing more than diplomats of other countries. If the children of Canadian business

representatives abroad are going to school, they are going to exactly the same schools as the children of our diplomats.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for his response. However the foreign services directive indicates that there is a double standard. Students are given three taxpayer funded flights a year. Students are even going to school on the French Riviera. These perks are more lucrative than in the private sector.

Not only is there a two-tier pension plan but we learn there is now a two-tier education plan: one for ordinary Canadians and one for the Canadian elite.

Does the minister not understand that Canadians will no longer tolerate these Liberal double standards for the Canadian elite?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the suggestion of the hon. member to review the treatment offered to children of our people who are abroad.

I challenge her to verify the allegations she is making here which I think are totally unfounded. It is very nice to take her lead from a very biased report that does not take reality into account.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

We have learned that the number of francophones applying to become Canadian Forces officers dropped drastically after the closure of the military college in Saint-Jean was announced. Applications are down to 102 this year from 243 last year, a drop of more than 50 per cent.

Does the Minister of National Defence recognize that, as we had predicted, closing the military college in Saint-Jean will have the effect of discouraging francophones from becoming Canadian Forces officers because they can no longer train in their own environment and in French, as they could in Saint-Jean?

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that recruitment for the armed forces is down right across the country. One of the reasons is that the economy is buoyant.

Historically when times are rough there is obviously less competition for the various places. As a result of improvement