

tive taken by the present Minister of Fisheries and Oceans who, in 1979, signed a memorandum of intent on trans-boundary pollution with the United States. I would like to remind him that he is benefiting from initiatives that have been taken over a number of years. Therefore, he can go to Quebec city in a very strong position. Would the Prime Minister be willing to accept a U.S. position that would call only for research on acid rain without immediate action to reduce emissions?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that was the position put forward by the American Government in response to my hon. friend when he was Minister of the Environment. That is why there was no progress of any kind made during his tenure as Minister of the Environment. We are trying, and I think we will succeed in doing much better than that.

NIAGARA RIVER POLLUTION

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that reply and I look forward to that conclusion. I would ask the Prime Minister whether or not he can assure the House that he will have on the agenda for the meeting the matter of toxic chemicals in the Niagara River, a matter that we in the House have been pressing for quite some time.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think that the kinds of historic initiatives set out by the Minister of the Environment in a matter of six months, designed to introduce, and have approved, a quite splendid program, indicate our deep commitment, as members of the Government, to the environment. We will be taking all steps to deal with problem areas in our environment, including the one to which my hon. friend refers.

I say with no reluctance that I am not used to miracles, and I do not expect any miracles to occur overnight. What I am working for and toward is substantial progress upon which we can build to clean up our environment.

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EDUCATION

PROVINCIAL EXPENDITURES ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor-Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State. The Johnson report has again dramatized the fact that post-secondary education expenditures have decreased as a percentage of Gross National Product over the last eight years, primarily because the provinces have not paid their shares. To the Government's credit, it has increased EPF transfers by 7.4 per cent. However, the pattern continues. Ontario has only increased PSE expenditures by 5 per cent, and British Columbia appears to have decreased university and college funding by 5 per cent. Is the Government prepared to act at last to ensure that EPF transfers to the provinces for post-secondary education are in fact used for that purpose?

Privilege—Mr. Lapierre

Hon. Walter McLean (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for raising an issue that is important not only to universities but to Canada as a whole and to our entire program of economic and social renewal, the full participation of Canada's universities.

I want to assure the Hon. Member that the purpose of releasing the report was to engage all sectors of the Canadian public in the discussion about the future. The Minister of Finance has indicated that the present arrangements would continue for another year, and we are looking at the possibility of a mutually-agreeable arrangement with the provinces for the following financial year.

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CLERK OF PETITIONS' REPORT

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the petitions presented by Hon. Members on Thursday, March 14, 1985, meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

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● (1200)

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

MR. LAPIERRE—USE OF THE WORD "MESQUIN" IN THE HOUSE

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege prompted by the remarks of the Right Hon. the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) during oral questions period. He used the word "mesquin" in connection with a very legitimate question which I asked him and which is of great concern to me, namely the future of sugar industry workers. The Prime Minister, who is supposed to have deep respect for the House and who fancies himself as a civilized man and has nothing but praise for this institution, used a word which Your Honour will find on page 105 of Beauchesne's French edition, where the word "mesquin" is given as the equivalent of "cheap", definitely unparliamentary.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps you might ask the Prime Minister to choose his words more carefully when addressing the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member is actually rising on a point of order, but I accept his purpose. I heard the word and I took it that it was in reference to the comments which were being made by the Hon. Member, and not his character. At the time I did not find that the word was being used in an unparliamentary manner, although I am sure that Hon. Members on my left understood how Hon. Members on my right might have