

Government Orders

Now to my question. Earlier in your speech, hon. member, through you, Madam Speaker, you said to us: "There are no strings attached whatsoever to post-secondary education. Of course, we have a number of strings attached on health". So, why does a committee on national education standards exist and why has this committee already issued a 130 page report on national education standards?

Mr. Peterson: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Terrebonne for his questions. First, as regards the public service, the minister and the committee insisted on some form of co-operation between the unions and the government concerning substitution, that is that the retirement arrangement must be accepted by individual public servants. Perhaps, and I hope so, in the next three years, all government retirees will follow the course of substitution making use of the generous benefits offered by the government.

• (1635)

Secondly, as concerns national standards in education, neither our committee, nor the minister nor the budget will require national standards in education. This is surely part of the negotiations undertaken by the Minister of Human Resources Development.

In listening to all the witnesses, we were very grateful to a group that suggested the standards in the area of education be not national, but international, standards of knowledge and excellence, given the area is a competitive one.

And we, like all Canadians, in Quebec, in British Columbia or in any province or territory, must take international competition and our own system of education across Canada into account, if we are really to take advantage of it.

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Madam Speaker, the hon. member opposite apologized twice. First, he admitted that the Liberals and the Conservatives were responsible for the national debt. I thank him for admitting that. Of course, everyone agrees that we must reduce the deficit.

The hon. member also referred to three sacred cows, but he forgot one. He forgot the multinationals. Again, everyone agrees that multinationals often enjoy tax shelters which are far too generous. The same goes for banks. It is a disgrace when banks hardly pay any taxes.

The cuts in transfers hurt the poor and the young. Our young people have almost lost all hope, since they basically have two options, particularly in rural areas: unemployment or income security. This situation hurts them a great deal. I wonder if we could provide more help to these young people.

The hon. member did not mention the cuts affecting the Eastern Quebec Development Plan. The plan had a budget of \$6.5 million. That money will not be available next year. The provinces will have to pay. Our farmers will have to put up with a 15 per cent cut this year, and another one next year, which will amount to a 30 per cent reduction in their subsidies. Again, Quebec will have to pay.

I know that everyone must make sacrifices. People back home, and elsewhere, are prepared to make sacrifices. However, this does not mean that the poor have to make the biggest sacrifices. I ask the hon. member: How could his government provide a little help in rural areas and give some hope to people?

Mr. Peterson: Madam Speaker, the hon. member was right when he said that the poor should be a concern for every party and every member in this House.

He also referred to the deficits. Indeed, the federal deficits were the responsibility of the Conservative and Liberal governments, just like the Quebec deficit is now the responsibility of the PQ government, whose last budget did not do much to solve the problem. I urge all provincial governments in Canada to rise to the challenge and do what we are trying to do now.

• (1640)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Pursuant to Standing Order 38, it is my duty to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, nuclear non-proliferation treaty; the hon. member for Bourassa, immigration; the hon. member for Essex—Kent, agriculture.

Mr. Grubel: Madam Speaker, I have a very quick question for my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry. The time for questions and comments on the last debate has expired.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to stand again in the House, this place where Canadians look for leadership, for the proper fiscal management of the country, to speak to Bill C-76, the budget implementation act.

I must share with everyone that I have considerable frustration in this place. Since being elected to the House I am convinced that one reason we have the huge problem of debt is that we lack an effective mechanism to control it. The reason is simple. Governments basically respond to their election platform and rightly so.

Taking it back one step, unfortunately during election campaigns we have trained Canadian voters to be very selfish. Over the last 30 years we have assisted Canadian voters to not make prudent fiscal decisions but simply ones that appeal to their greed. My observa-