

Oral Questions

I would like to point out to the hon. member that over 200,000 private sector jobs were created in the past eight months. This trend even applies in Quebec, where over 50,000 jobs were created in the past year.

There is no doubt that the economy is slow, due to a slowdown in the American economy and to the fact that the economic recovery was based mostly on our capacity to export. This having been said, most economists predict that the slowdown that everybody was expecting next year will hit us this year and that next year, we can expect a recovery.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, instead of spinning yarns, the Minister of Finance would be well advised to take a real look at his balance sheet since coming to office.

Mortgage rates, for example, have increased by 30 per cent, the growth rate for exports dropped 90 per cent over three months and there has been no net job creation over the past six months. That is the real balance sheet of this government, of the Minister of Finance. Therefore, he should have given me real answers and real figures instead of making it all up.

I would like to ask him the following question: Will he acknowledge that a growth rate of close to zero confirms the failure of his economic strategy, which has not enabled us to create any new jobs or to offer Quebecers and Canadians the hope of dignity through employment, which the Prime Minister keeps on repeating?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no idea where the hon. member gets his figures. Maybe from the "Just for Laughs" festival. Please allow me, Mr. Speaker, to give you the real figures.

The unemployment rate in May of this year was 9.5 per cent, compared to 10.4 per cent in May 1994; shipments in the manufacturing sector were 17 per cent higher this month than in May 1994; the trade balance surplus hit an all-time high of \$23.2 billion in the first quarter of 1995; the deficit in Canada's current account, which is normally around 4 per cent, is currently at 2 per cent. We are very proud of our accomplishments.

* * *

[English]

BOSNIA

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, since it appears the Canadian hostages in Bosnia are being released, the government now has an opportunity to safely scale down the Canadian commitment to Bosnia, which is scheduled to end in just three months. An orderly withdrawal started now would take about that time to be completed.

Will the Prime Minister end his chronic waffling and hand-wringing and announce the Canadian contribution will not be extended beyond September?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Canadian soldiers there are playing an extremely useful role. We have decided to extend our mandate for another six months. We will make a decision at that time. We have to finish the job we started. We will not quit in mid-term. We said we were to be there for six months, and Canadian soldiers and the Canadian people are the kind of people who do the job they say they will do. If we decide to go it will be decided in accordance with our commitments and with our partners in this situation.

• (1440)

I have to say to the House of Commons that when we look objectively, before the UN troops arrived there were approximately 200,000 people killed in one year, and it was reduced to 3,000 last year. This means the presence of the UN troops there has saved thousands and thousands of lives. The Canadian soldiers and the others in the UN force have done a very good job.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, talking about Bosnia, the Prime Minister stated in this House: "We are very far away from this part of the world and in many ways it is somewhat more of a European problem than a Canadian problem".

If the Prime Minister actually believes what he said, will this be the position the government will take at the G-7 summit?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course I said it is more of a European problem than a Canadian problem. But peacekeeping around the world has been a very proud policy of the Canadian government.

We have had peacekeepers around the world. We initiated peacekeeping during the Suez crisis when Mike Pearson created that solution to solve that very difficult war with Great Britain and France versus Egypt.

Since that time Canadians have always been present at peacekeeping operations. We have been in Cyprus; we have been in the Golan; we have been everywhere there has been a need for Canadian soldiers. There is nothing more satisfying for me when I am travelling to meet with the leaders of other countries than to have them tell me that Canadian troops are always the best.

* * *

[Translation]

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance.

The first victims of an economic slowdown are always young people in low-paying jobs. The situation has continued to deteriorate, since youth unemployment has gone up from 11.2