

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is of course right when he says that we are negotiating bilaterally with the European Union as a comprehensive unit, but how does he expect to overcome the problem arising from the fact that yesterday, the representative of the European Union made it quite clear that he could not conclude an agreement without the support of member countries Spain and Portugal?

*[English]*

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has negotiated in good faith.

Canada has never approached the negotiation from any perspective other than that of achieving a conservation regime, a means of preventing further destruction of fish stocks and the rebuilding of the six species now under moratorium.

The response from around the world has been tremendous, including that of the vast majority of EU member states. Populations are generally saying this is right, this is good, this is a question that affects the common heritage of mankind.

Even where the political will may be somewhat lacking, the public expression of a commitment to preserving a resource that belongs to the planet will win out and we will have an effective regime agreed by both sides.

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*[Translation]***CANADA SOCIAL TRANSFER**

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

By setting up the Canada social transfer as a block payment for health care, post-secondary education and social assistance, the federal government has given itself more power to impose national standards while continuing to reduce transfer payments for these programs.

Will the Minister of Finance admit that the Canada social transfer will allow him both to continue reducing transfer payments to the provinces and to tighten his grip on social programs under cover of the new standards being planned now for health care and eventually for social assistance and post-secondary education?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the last budget, we gave the federal and provincial governments a mechanism to tailor their deficits to their financial means. It was very clear that this was a joint effort, and we gave the provinces the requisite prior notice.

The issue of national standards is very clear. We said in the budget that we were not going to abolish the Canada Health Act nor tamper with the issue of residency for social assistance. The Minister of Human Resources Development will negotiate all other issues with the provinces. He is going to sit down with them and discuss the issues.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, two things are clear. First, the Minister of Finance is cutting transfer payments, second, he is trying to get a stranglehold on provincial programs to serve his own purposes. Everybody agrees that this much is obvious.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Gauthier:** Will the Minister of Finance admit that withdrawing his financial commitment and changing the rules go hand in hand? He is putting this in practice now with the Canada social transfer, in order to give himself the means to ensure compliance with current and future national standards, for example in the areas of health care, post-secondary education and social assistance.

Will he at last reveal his intentions?

• (1425)

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the one thing that is clear to me is that we have given the provinces what they asked for: flexibility to reduce their costs. We have given them the flexibility that they need to improve the management of their programs. Therefore, we have met the expectations of the provinces and of Canadians.

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*[English]***INDIAN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, three of my Reform colleagues have just returned from a fact finding tour of the indiscriminate logging that has taken place on the Stoney Reserve in Alberta.

The member for North Island—Powell River, who has over 20 years of forestry experience, said he has never witnessed as much timber cut in one place at one time.

The minister of Indian affairs, through the Indian Act and the Indian timber regulations, has a legal obligation to ensure sound logging practices and prevent environmental disasters on reserves. The minister knew about the logging on this reserve yet did nothing to stop it.

Why did the minister not act to prevent the destruction of the forest on the Stoney Reserve in Alberta?

**Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the assertion of the Reform leader is incorrect. We did act. We do have someone on site. We