

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 15, 1991

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[English]

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, the report into Canada's newest immigrant, the former Iraqi ambassador to the U.S., raises many, many unanswered questions.

Why did the ministers of external Affairs and employment and immigration resort to finger-pointing, blaming public servants who only did their job, thereby breaking away from that long-standing parliamentary principle of ministerial responsibility?

The Clerk of the Privy Council, the Prime Minister's deputy, rejected fast-tracking Al-Mashat's case, but that recommendation was ignored. Given that no ministers were supposedly involved, who gave the order to process Al-Mashat at break-neck speed? Was the Clerk of the Privy Council interviewed by government investigators? Three government departments were involved in the case yet the ministers were never informed, and what of the unfair treatment of the thousands of potential immigrants to this country waiting years to be processed?

Yes, it is more than a coincidence. Only a full inquiry will provide Canadians with some answers.

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SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, the throne speech this week was significant not just in the things it said, but also in things it did not say.

It did not contain even a token announcement of a national child care strategy as past speeches have. It did not contain any measures to address the tragedy of child poverty in Canada, and it did not contain any measures to get people back to work.

This government and this House made a commitment to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. If we are to achieve this, we must be working now to make the changes and set up a timetable for action. Unfortunately this government seems unprepared to make concrete commitments.

But the throne speech did mention a review of policies relating to the family. Tory review is a scary concept to most Canadian families and it may mean elimination of family allowances as some Conservative MPs have demanded.

This government should abandon its band-aid solutions to child poverty and start dealing with the real issues such as pay equity, an adequate minimum wage, adequate affordable housing for all Canadians, a national child care strategy, and full employment policies to get Canadians back to work.

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SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Mr. J.W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, I know there will be little debate among Canadians about the old axiom that knowledge is power, or about the fact that education and training are crucial keys to future prosperity in Canada. Yet one of the most profound and disturbing revelations in the throne speech is that Canada has not been getting full value for the very substantial current investments being made in our search for knowledge, skill, and innovation.

I feel sure it will come as some surprise to many Canadians that the federal government alone, both directly and indirectly, is now spending close to \$11 billion annually in support of education and training. These priorities are high dollar items in provincial budgets as well.