

Oral Questions

a year pay less taxes than they used to pay, but the unemployed still pay taxes on unemployment insurance.

• (1430)

When is the government going to make this country stronger, truly, by fair tax reform, creating jobs, attacking training and investing in Canadians, which is what the government should be doing?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to dishearten my hon. friend, but she is wrong again in terms of her figures. The numbers are not the ones that she used.

If she would care to consult page 98 of the budget, she will see that the federal government does not transfer the amount to which she refers. We transfer \$42.35 million in direct major transfers to persons, and we transfer in cash and tax transfers to other levels of government for that purpose an extra \$38.9 billion, which indicates the enormity of the contribution of the Government of Canada toward the provinces for use in their jurisdiction.

My hon. friend is criticizing us for areas of jurisdiction that are exclusively provincial, for example education. We agree that education has to be improved, which is why there is the prosperity initiative. We do not have the right constitutionally to insinuate ourselves unilaterally into the jurisdictional areas of the provinces under the Constitution.

My hon. friend is concerned about the level of constitutional illiteracy in the House and so I am trying to deal with it. With regard to the report, I share my hon. friend's concern about some of the deficiencies in our system. But the report is useful in that it underlines the government's message that education and training are key to Canada's ability to compete internationally. The targets set out in the report are generally desirable and consistent with those mentioned in the Speech from the Throne.

In fact, to conclude, to indicate the advances that we are making, we actually heard from the Liberal Party today the word "competitiveness".

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of employment.

The minister claims that his government is committed to training. He claims that he has a modern and effective

training and apprenticeship program. According to the Economic Council of Canada, today's apprenticeship programs produce a range of workers better suited for the job market in the 1940s, not the 1990s.

Will the minister of employment admit that his apprenticeship program is a failure, and when will he start doing something to help the hundreds of thousands of young people who need help to get a job?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, to continue the exercise of teaching constitutional law to the Liberals, apprenticeship programs are a provincial responsibility.

While apprenticeship is a provincial responsibility, the discussion paper entitled *Learning Well—Living Well* has outlined the major challenge which Canadians face in terms of having a better apprenticeship program.

I invite the Liberals to join with all other Canadians in trying to be part of the solution, not the problem.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, the minister is passing the buck. It seems to me that he is spending a little too much time under the sun.

I would like to ask the minister about his commitment to putting people back to work. He knows that the drop-out rate is 30 per cent in Canada, that 70 per cent of high school students do not attend post-secondary education. They need help in finding a job.

I would like to ask the minister specifically: What is he doing for the hundreds of thousands of young Canadians who leave high school and need help in finding a job? Specifically, what is he doing?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I know I must not do that too lightly, but whenever he refers to my colour in the sun in New Brunswick it is true that the republic of Madawaska has beautiful sun.

[*Translation*]

And where I come from, they know what I mean.

[*English*]

As for the question the member raises, my colleague the minister for youth indicated yesterday that young Canadians looking for work benefit from programs for kids in schools, colleges and universities. For those youth who have quit school we have a host of programs trying