

Oral Questions

which would begin to deal with this very serious problem of concentration. Will the Minister assure the House that the proposals contained in that Bill, or stronger proposals, will be fully encompassed in the new competition legislation?

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that the proposed new competition Bill has been hammered out over the past couple of months with business, with experts in the field, and we feel it will deal realistically with the realities of business in Canada today.

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● (1430)

THE ECONOMY**MINISTER'S CONSULTATIONS PRIOR TO PREPARATION OF BUDGET**

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. The Minister must be concerned with the delays and the slow progress of the recovery in Canada. Canada's national income today is well below the peak it reached prior to the 1981-82 recession, whereas in the United States it is well above that peak. Since this means government policies simply are not working today, will the Minister explain to the House why he is telling his business friends in private meetings that he is not proposing any changes in economic policy in the next budget?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have had extensive consultations with various groups across the country, labour unions, farmers, consumer groups, business people and professional economists. I have not told them that I was not considering or was considering any particular step. The purpose of my consultations was to ask their advice. I want to report to my friend that the unanimous reaction I have had up to now from these consultations has been to the effect that the general thrust of government financial and economic policy announced in my Budget last April, is one that has been endorsed and fully supported across the country by all organizations that I have met. No one has recommended a 90 degree or a 180 degree change. There were some specific proposals and some suggestions for improvements made by various groups, and I have undertaken to examine them very carefully.

For the record, I should like to point out to my friend that, for instance, the latest issue of *The Economist* has a set of economic and financial indicators. If he looks at the situation in terms of industrial production, gross national product, retail sales, unemployment improvement, and inflation reduction, to mention only these, he will find that the situation in Canada compares favourably with that in the United States and is better than that in any other industrialized country. He can get those figures for himself.

Mr. McGrath: Why don't you compare unemployment? Get the real picture of what is going on.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, there is no question whatsoever that in Canada we are well below the peak we reached in 1981 and we are also far, far behind the United States in job creation. They have made far better use of their talents down there than we have up here.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER CHANGE POLICY PRIORITIES

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Two weeks ago the *European Management Forum* reported that last year Canada had fallen from fifth place to eleventh place in international competitiveness. That means that Canadians jobs are being transferred to other countries which are more competitive.

Since the competitive position of a country is the key determinant of economic performance and permanent job creation, would the Minister agree to shift his priorities from announcing temporary, ineffective job-creation programs, announcements which are made purely for political reasons, and launch a wholesale attack on the problem of lack of productivity and loss of our international competitive position?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is wrong in his first statement. Last year Canada created more jobs, proportionately, than did the United States.

Mr. McGrath: That is not true.

Mr. Lalonde: The employment creation record of Canada was better last year than that of any other industrial country, including the United States. That is the situation in terms of job creation, and I challenge the Hon. Member to prove the contrary.

As far as the question of competitiveness is concerned, if my hon. friend had read my speeches and listened to my budget speech last year, and to the economic statement I made in October, 1982, he would find that the questions of productivity and competitiveness are at the top of our preoccupations in order to create good, steady jobs for Canadians. He quotes from a European publication which apparently refers to figures dating back to 1982 and the first quarter of 1983. My friend should know that in 1983 productivity in this country made a big, positive jump. Rather than rely on outdated information and publication of facts about 12 months old, he should keep up to date, look at the latest figures, and realize that Canada has done extremely well in 1983, and that we intend to do just as well in 1984.

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CRIMINAL CODE**PROPOSAL TO PROSECUTE PROSTITUTES' CUSTOMERS**

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Justice who is proposing changes in the Criminal Code which would charge customers