

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 10, 1991

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

POINT OF ORDER

REMARKS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Right Hon. Joe Clark (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to a point of order raised on Friday, I have checked the record of *Hansard* and I see that inadvertently in an answer I gave to my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell on Friday I used the word “negative” when I intended to use the word “positive”. It was in fact a part of my response which was not particularly relevant to the question posed. The question asked me to take notice of a matter which I have done, but I wanted the record to be clear.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Gilbert Parent (Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold) moved:

That this House call upon the government to implement immediate measures to alleviate the devastatingly high rate of unemployment amongst Canadian youth.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks, I know it is not the custom in this House to state who is here and who is not, but I am particularly pleased that the Minister of State responsible for Youth is in his seat today to hear the comments not only from this side of the House but from all sides. We hope it will help him in

his deliberations to alleviate the problem of unemployment among youth.

There is no need to dwell on the importance of jobs for Canadians, and I mean all Canadians, including our youth, including students. After reaching a low of 11.1 per cent in March 1990, the seasonally adjusted youth unemployment rate has increased steadily in response to the 1990–91 recession. The seasonally adjusted youth unemployment rate reached 14.9 per cent in January of this year. This is the highest monthly rate recorded since July 1986, except of course for the last figures received which show that our youth unemployment is now well over 16 per cent. This is unacceptable in a country as rich and as supposedly prosperous as Canada could be.

The developments underlying this trend are twofold. First, seasonally adjusted youth employment declined by 138,000 or six per cent, between March 1990 and January 1991. This is some 56.1 per cent of the total decline in the seasonally adjusted employment since the beginning of this period. Second, seasonally adjusted youth unemployment increased by 32 per cent or 92,000 students throughout this period. Labour market conditions would have been worse had it not been for a 1.8 per cent decline in the size of the youth labour force during this period.

We have to question seriously the government's commitment to student employment. Last year the government decided to cut the Summer Employment/Experience Development Program, also called the Challenge program, by 35 per cent. This is a program which in 1985 provided 37,345 jobs for students. Had the program continued, it could have provided, in my opinion, in excess of 50,000 jobs this year alone.

After such a cruel blow to their expectations, the government went a step beyond and decided to close employment centres on campuses. The numbers proved that the employment centres were heavily used. For instance, the employment centre at the University of Calgary, which has a student population of about 20,000, received over 15,000 application forms. It booked 656 rooms on campus for employers and it conducted 4,415