

Oral Questions

An hon. member: There are a lot of nervous nellys over there.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I remind the House and the people of Canada the initiatives we took with respect to expenditure reduction were opposed every single solitary time by members opposite.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, in fact there are many studies to indicate—I have one here by Informetrica, one by Wood Gundy, one by WEFA—it is the government's own monetary policies that have reduced the number of jobs in the economy, that have reduced the amount of revenue to be raised in this economy. If the government had different monetary policies we would not have had the debt and deficit we have.

For example, I would cite a quotation from Wood Gundy which says that the government's single-minded pursuit of inflation has "already blown the government's revenue projections off this year by \$8 million".

My question to the minister is this. Will he abandon the failed ways of the last nine years and bring in a budget which addresses the fundamentals of reducing unemployment and getting this country really back on track?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member is proposing is a Bob Rae solution to the economy. I would rather take a Roy Romanow solution.

• (1430)

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Once again the federal government finds it impossible to defend its own policies.

I want to point out something that happened yesterday. I think this is really what it is all about. There were 3,000 people lined up for three days in Edmonton for 700 part-time jobs. Surely the government must see that it bears some responsibility for this. Its own policies have contributed to this situation of unemployment.

Just two days ago the Dominion Bond Rating Service said that the main reasons for provincial shortfalls had to do with federal caps on transfer payments, the recession, and the decline in manufacturing jobs.

If the Minister of Finance is really serious about provincial debt and unemployment will he make sure his

government stops reducing transfer payments, stops making trade deals that cause unemployment, and brings in a budget that puts people back to work?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, there are 12,328,000 Canadians who are working in Canada today. That is up from 11 million when we assumed office. There have been well in excess of 1.3 million new jobs created. As a matter of fact—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mazankowski: They say it is not enough. I agree, but it is still the best job creation record within the G-7 over the last 10 years.

An hon. member: It is the highest unemployment rate of the G-7.

Mr. Mazankowski: The hon. member asks: "Why don't you do something to create jobs?" Since she is speaking about Alberta the hon. member might want to know that since 1987, 80 per cent of the new jobs created in Alberta have been created in the newly emerging economies, those new industries related quite directly to the new economies such as high information-based technology, telecommunications, the communications sector, and primarily exports to the United States.

The New Democratic Party is opposed to the free trade agreement.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mazankowski: Go out and try to sell that to Albertans, because exports to the United States have increased by 48 per cent since the free trade agreement was put into place.

An hon. member: Albertans aren't the only people in the world.

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NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, yesterday President Clinton pledged that he would not introduce the NAFTA legislation until the agreement is made tougher in the areas of the environment and of labour, something the opposition has been advocating all along.