

Oral Questions

to look at the services available and see what could be done to better meet the needs expressed.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after making numerous inquiries about the proposed reorganization, asking the human resources development committee for information and being assured that our caucus would be informed, we learned this morning that all CEC employees have already been told which ones will be closed, undergo changes or remain open. As for the Bloc, only this afternoon will it be informed.

How can the minister justify waiting so long to inform us, unless it was to prevent us from doing our job as the official opposition?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide a small word of advice to the hon. member not to get too excited, because no decisions have been taken. The decisions will be taken in order to improve the service. We have made the offer to her caucus to consult with them, which we will be doing this afternoon, to develop the best information.

I can guarantee this hon. member and all members of the House that the reorganization and modernization of the service centres will provide better service, particularly in the smaller cities and rural areas of Canada. I can make that guarantee to the member.

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• (1435)

ECONOMY

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as much as the Prime Minister wants to say the economy of Canada is good, it is not.

In 1993 the government inherited promising economic growth in the country. What has happened? Instead of nurturing the recovery that was there the government continued on an old pattern of spend and tax Canadians. The only growth policy the government could come up with was to devalue the dollar, resulting in an unbalanced recovery that has been entirely reliant on exports to the United States.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Now that the U.S. economy is slowing and exports are dropping, what will he do to avert a recession, other than devaluing the currency?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's statement does not coincide with the facts.

At the time we took office unemployment was at 11.5 per cent. It is now at 9.5 per cent. At the time we took office there were 433,000 fewer Canadians working than are working today. At the time we took office growth was anemic. The fact is that we have just come off one of the best years we have seen in a decade. In fact the OECD stated only yesterday that again this year Canada would lead all the G-7 nations.

The fact is that we have had a very good record, which is due to the policies of the government. We intend to continue those policies.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance can say what he wants. There was some good growth in 1994, but today it is down to 0.7 per cent, which is a multiple drop. The Minister of Finance should admit that.

What we need at this time is an economic statement from the government indicating that the government has a plan to eliminate the deficit. Can we count on the Minister of Finance to present an economic statement this fall so we can go to the people of Canada and say this is how the government will get rid of the deficit and bring in a balanced budget before the end of this Parliament?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made it very clear that it is our intention to eliminate the deficit. We have also made it very clear that it is our intention to put the country back into good economic shape. That means putting Canadians to work, it means preserving our social programs, and it means giving the country hope.

It is not the intention on this side of the House to bring in the kinds of scorch and burn policies the Reform Party would advocate. It is not the intention of this party to destroy the Canadian economy and the hopes of so many young. It is the intention of this party to do what Canadians want, and that is to make Canada live up to its potential. That means that we will take on anybody in the world.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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[Translation]

DIRECT SATELLITE BROADCASTING

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Following the public hearings regarding the draft orders in council on satellite television, Liberal MPs abdicated their responsibilities as parliamentarians by giving a blank cheque to the federal government. Unless the minister follows up on the Bloc's recommendations, the government will now go ahead