

Oral Questions

in the labour force, are major steps forward that the Government has taken.

REFUNDABLE SALES TAX CREDIT

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, why will the Minister not admit that his Budget pushes more women and children into poverty, particularly those half million in the \$15,000 to \$20,000 bracket, and that the refundable tax credit about which he raves is only for the very poor and will not even pay for last year's sales tax increases, much less cover the loss in the indexation of family benefits which the Minister also imposed?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the statements of the Hon. Member are totally false, and I listened to what she said—

Ms. Mitchell: They are not false. How can you say that?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): She is being critical of me because I have directed in this Budget—

Ms. Mitchell: Women are being critical of you.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, it is very hard to listen and talk at the same time. I think the Hon. Member should listen.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Mitchell: You should listen.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have said before that Hon. Members who ask questions should allow the answers to be heard. Order, please. The Hon. Minister will finish briefly.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): The Hon. Member is criticizing me for doing something to help the very poor. I am very proud of doing something to help the very poor. That is what this Government is all about.

GOVERNMENT TAX POLICY

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Finance not agree that, as a result of the last two Budgets, the Conservative Government has, by deliberate tax policy, widened the gap between the rich and poor in society and that, by lowering the benefit levels to \$15,000 for the refundable sales tax and the prepayment on the child tax credit, there is now a new Conservative definition of poverty?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I totally reject the allegation of the Hon. Member. We have done two things in this Budget that are helping the people who are below the poverty line, the acceleration of the child tax credit and the introduction of the refundable sales tax credit. I have indicated that these are both initiatives that we want to watch and learn from, and perhaps in a future Budget we will be able to enhance them. Why is it that the Hon. Member

cannot congratulate us for these progressive, innovative new changes in budgetary policy?

[*Translation*]

POVERTY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister of Finance now telling us that his Government has a new definition of poverty which will condemn nearly 300,000 poor families to conditions that are even worse?

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this is the most outrageous distortion of a good policy initiative. There has never been any new—

Mr. Frith: Three hundred thousand families.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): It is very hard when the Hon. Member asks a question and cannot stop asking it once he takes his seat. We have indicated very clearly that there is no new definition of poverty here. What we have said is that, within the limited resources that the Government has, we have introduced two major new initiatives to help those people in low-income brackets, the low-income sales tax credit and the acceleration of the child tax credit payment, both of which have been—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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YOUTH

DUTIES OF MINISTER

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor-Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Since the Government took office, some \$100 million has been cut from youth expenditures. Now the Minister of State for Youth seems to be in the process of disappearing. Will the Prime Minister tell the House what are the duties of the Minister of State for Youth who has neither program nor budget?

● (1440)

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in point of fact, as a result of the initiatives of the Minister of State for Youth—

Some Hon. Members: She is gone.

Mr. Mulroney: —youth unemployment since September, 1984, has declined by almost three full percentage points.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: She has disappeared with them.