

Supply

Then this one: "Free trade critics are confusing the facts. They are blaming the FTA for job losses that are attributable to a variety of other economic circumstances, such as the recession. There is also evidence that the FTA rather than hurting the economy may have actually offset some of the damage that the recession has done to the Canadian economy today". That is from the Conference Board of Canada.

Here is another one: "The perception in some quarters that the FTA has had a negative impact on the economy is not supported by the evidence. Canada's access to the U.S. market has improved since the agreement with 15 of 22 Canadian industry sectors gaining market shares. Canada's exports to the United States have reached record highs and net foreign direct investment inflows turned positive in 1990 and 1991 after nearly two decades of net outflows. Canada has already benefited from the FTA in a number of ways".

That one is from the Royal Bank of Canada. I could go on, but I will simply conclude by asking my hon. friend, if he is correct and the FTA is the source of all these problems, to explain to me why they have had a recession in Germany, Japan, France, the United States and every other industrialized country in the world?

Mr. Fisher: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the hon. member's question. I am still completely puzzled by his statement the other day in the House directed toward critics of the free trade agreement that we had to stop hiding behind a high wage wall.

I have the figures here somewhere. If we look at the European economies they range from a high for total compensation, wages and benefits, I believe Norway is on the top with Germany and the Scandinavian countries coming just slightly below, of somewhere around \$24. Canada, out of 13 countries, comes in eleventh.

I do not hear the member from South Shore and I do not hear anyone from the government suggesting that the European countries which certainly are competitors ought to be lowering their compensation rates for wages and fringes to their employees. I have the impression that they are doing very, very well, thank you, as far as their economy is concerned. The German mark has almost supplanted the American dollar as being the standard by which progress is made.

Mr. McDermid: Boy, are you behind.

Mr. Fisher: Well, perhaps, but if you want to use the American as the standard, the world's greatest debtor nation, I suspect that there really is not much efficacy in doing that. The United States is hardly something to look upon.

I am rather curious about the member quoting the Conference Board of Canada. I could be wrong, but was the Conference Board of Canada not one of the boards that the government dismantled in the mini budget in December?

An hon. member: No.

Mr. Fisher: No? Well, it is slated. The only reason the government has not got rid of it then is that it is a private body. Any other bearer of bad news, it certainly does a good job of eliminating. I find it appalling that the member would stand up and try to defend the government's abysmal record.

• (1320)

Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, I came here and I listened to what I know is the opposition motion today which essentially says that the government, the Conservatives, are responsible for the economic mess that we find ourselves in. I do not buy that. I do not think it is true. I do not think it is right what the Liberals say in their motion today, that all of our problems economically, the recession and everything else can be laid at the door of the Conservatives.

A lot of things can be laid at the door of the Conservatives. I do not particularly like the idea to purchase helicopters for \$5.8 billion. I think it is wrong. I think it is a wrong idea. The parliamentary secretary to the minister of defence thinks it is a wrong idea. I think it is time for us to look at a little bit of sharing the blame because we have to admit that when the Conservatives came to power, they were saddled with a pretty heavy deficit.

We have to admit that when Bob Rae came to power in Ontario the Liberals did it to him. They left him with the cupboard bare. You have to admit that when Mr. Romanow—and I cannot blame this on the Liberals—came into power for the NDP in Saskatchewan the Conservatives did to him what the Liberals had done to Bob Rae.