

Oral Questions

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Privatization and Regulatory Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, obviously, by the hon. member's question, he has come to a conclusion before he has heard the answer.

If the hon. member remembers back to November 1, the Prime Minister told the House that this government is committed to a strong and united Canada, one which is great enough to ensure Quebec its full place. I can inform the hon. member that no such studies are taking place.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I spoke with the economist in question, Mr. Pierre Fortin, this morning. He confirmed that indeed those studies are taking place.

In light of that conversation, I ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether he will make a statement in the House to tell us what studies are taking place, what plans the government is now contemplating and why it cannot be more forthright and honest with the people of this country over what is a very sensitive issue about the future of Canada?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Privatization and Regulatory Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked, Pierre Fortin was a representative of the Association of Quebec Economists. He was not with the Bank of Canada, or working for the Department of Finance.

My answer to the first question sticks. There are no such studies.

* * *

[*Translation*]

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

* * *

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration who confessed this morning being totally helpless on the immigration issue and a possible Canada-Quebec agreement. I wish to touch upon another area of her jurisdiction, namely, that of vocational training. She has received a letter from the Quebec Minister of Manpower to the effect that the \$350 million she will be saving through the unemployment insurance tax reform on the backs of the Quebec unemployed

should normally be used to support vocational training. Would the minister agree to transfer these \$350 million to the Quebec Government which has exclusive jurisdiction in the area of vocational training?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that vocational training is a shared responsibility between the two levels of government. I have indeed received Mr. Bourbeau's letter, but the figures quoted therein pertaining to the amounts involved in vocational training and unemployment insurance benefits respectively are not clear. In Quebec, there are other expenses associated with training and unemployment insurance, and I do not agree with him concerning the payments.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. In other words, for the second time today, the minister has turned a deaf ear to Quebec's quite legitimate request. Under what constitutional authority can she claim to have legislative power in the area of education, since vocational training and education are one and the same, and on what basis does she feel she is empowered to appoint a national commission on vocational training against the province's will? Under what authority could she use such powers which are beyond the federal government's exclusive powers?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Last Spring, Mr. Speaker, there were negotiations between the provinces and the federal government concerning bilateral and multilateral agreements in the area of training, and Quebec was one of the provinces which signed the agreement. It was their idea that there should be an agreement to benefit the Province of Quebec. It was the Province of Quebec that was the one at the time which conducted the negotiations for all the provinces and not only for Quebec. The Quebec Government signed it.

• (1500)

[*English*]

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.