

S. O. 31

Combined, these numbers indicate a growing consumer confidence which can only mean one thing: more jobs and more opportunities for all Canadians.

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STUDENT LOANS

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, the federal government's plans for student aid keep getting worse and worse. Last year it was the introduction of a 3 per cent tax on student loans. Earlier this year it was the elimination of the six-month period of breathing room that students enjoyed after graduation before the interest began accumulating on their debt.

Now to add insult to injury after injury, the government will no longer guarantee student loans. Instead it will pay a 5 per cent risk premium to whatever bank it decides will have a monopoly on those loans. That lucky bank is going to take as little risk as it possibly can. How? It will do so by taking on as few risky students as it can get away with. Who are the risky students? They are the ones who cannot afford an education in the first place, the ones who are already paying the price for 20 per cent youth unemployment in a Tory recession.

These students deserve better. They deserve a student loan system designed to help them get an education and an economy strong enough to ensure that they can pay back what they owe.

Under Clinton the Americans propose doing better. Why can we not?

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POVERTY

Ms. Barbara Greene (Don Valley North): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada produces the low income cut-offs which count Canadians falling below an income level at which 58.5 per cent of their income is the average amount all Canadians spend on food, clothing and shelter. Income includes business losses and taxes but excludes loans, savings and in-kind benefits.

These statistics were never intended to be a poverty line and certainly do not tell us which Canadians suffer hardship or whether government income supplementation or job creation programs help the most needy.

• (1415)

If the House of Commons wants to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000 we need achievable goals, not a moving target that gallops off with every step forward we take.

Progressive Conservatives want to take real action to combat child poverty and assure every child in Canada an opportunity to thrive, but not through a scatter-gun approach that misses the target.

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MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the lack-lustre coronation campaign almost got off the ground when a declaration speech by the minister of defence was leaked.

Rather than admitting that a member of her team had mischievously leaked the speech, the minister without foundation placed blame on young Liberals, among others. Her accusations are irresponsible. Furthermore, why is the minister who is trying to sell herself as a new and fresh face showing such contempt for the ideals of Canadian youth?

I would remind her that it was not young Liberals who made her flip-flop on aboriginal student funding when she was minister of Indian affairs, nor on gun control when she was Minister of Justice, nor now on the \$5.8 billion purchase of helicopters.

Instead of denigrating Canadian youth, why does the minister not accept responsibility for her own actions rather than sounding like her old boss?

The first draft of her infamous speech claimed that she was not a traditional politician. Well, she may have packed halibut and worked on the mayonnaise line. However, today her allegations are not only fishy, but the attempts of her spin doctors to portray her as the northern Clinton are really piling the mayo on just a little too thick for Canadians' taste.

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GASOLINE TAXES

Mr. Ross Belsher (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, last Friday's edition of *The Vancouver Sun* contained a front page article on a Peat Marwick report which studied the costs of different methods of transportation in the greater Vancouver region.