

[Translation]

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY CONFERENCE—REQUEST THAT STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES BE PERMITTED TO ATTEND

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, if I understood the Minister correctly, to him only the national lobby groups are the legitimate representatives of the students.

Right now, there are about a thousand students out there the Minister is refusing to meet. His leader said this Government had to be generous, open and approachable. Could the Hon. Minister give the House the assurance that before any discussion takes place on cuts in funding for post-secondary education, student representatives will be consulted at the meeting on St. Valentine's Day?

In fact, could the Minister give the House the assurance that student representatives will be allowed to attend the meeting as observers, to ensure that their interests are being defended properly?

[English]

Hon. Walter McLean (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, possibly I should remind the Hon. Member, who was a Member on the government side of the House, that it was not this Party that unilaterally attacked post-secondary education with the six and five cuts that were imposed. It was not this Party which failed to consult the universities, students, administration or faculty. I assure him that I have already met with the administration, the CAUT, and the national student bodies, and we will continue with the process that the Prime Minister has mentioned.

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● (1430)

THE ECONOMY

ECONOMIC STATEMENT—IMPACT OF CUT-BACKS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Right Hon. Prime Minister. A minute ago he said again in the House that the program cuts and tax increases which the Minister of Finance brought in a number of days ago will lead to more jobs in the economy. Both he and the Minister of Finance have said that they will lead to more investment and growth.

My question is quite a serious one. Based on the actual experience of such a program applied to the Province of British Columbia, I would like to ask the Prime Minister to explain the following results to me. I will give him the figures with care, and ask him to treat the House seriously and answer the question. When Ministers of the Government of British Columbia brought in their budget they made a forecast of growth increase of 6 per cent. The result now is minus .1 per cent. They forecast an investment increase of 15 per cent, and the results are minus 5 per cent. Employment growth was forecast to be 4 per cent. The latest forecast is minus .9 per cent. Two days ago the Minister of Finance of British

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Columbia said that their deficit is now going to be larger than they expected. Why does the Prime Minister expect his program of cuts and tax increases will be good for Canada when it has been an unmitigated disaster for British Columbia?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have no quarrel with the facts as set out by my hon. friend. What is lacking in regard to the question addressed to a national Government capable of influencing fiscal and monetary policy in a real way is the intangible called confidence—investor confidence and consumer confidence.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney: I know that the socialists do not understand the word "confidence", and with good reason. However, that is a very important factor in motivating the private sector toward the co-operation which we are now seeing between provincial Governments and between the private sector and the federal Government to create those jobs. It is the new climate of fairness, openness and co-operation that is going to bring about the jobs that we require.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PROVINCIAL ECONOMY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has talked about business confidence and I, for one, think that the notion has some relevance. However, the very group that he is appealing to, who are now saying that his program is wonderful, also said that Mr. Bennett's program was wonderful when it was first brought in, and they have changed their minds.

I would like the Prime Minister to comment on this. The other day the head of the Business Council of B.C. said, with regard to that program in B.C., that "the economy hasn't recovered". The president of the Certified General Accountants Association of British Columbia, who liked the program before, has now seen the results and has said that "B.C. is heading for hell in a handbasket". He is advising his business clients to get out of the Province of British Columbia. Why should we listen to the Prime Minister when B.C. businessmen see the program as an unmitigated disaster?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I have always been mystified as to why the NDP delights in being so morose. They take such pleasure in other people's difficulties. British Columbia has a totally resource-based economy. It did go through a recession largely induced by the actions of the Liberal Government, and they went through difficult times, as is widely known.

We are trying, as best we can, to put together the framework which will inspire confidence from the private sector, co-operation with trade unions, and co-operation with provincial and federal Governments to try to harmonize our initiatives to create the kinds of jobs that a strong and united Canada can create. That is what we are going to do.