

Mr. Gabriel Desjardins (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, as usual, the hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair is more concerned about his performance in the House than about substance.

Earlier, he said that the minister's speech was all words and no substance. I beg to disagree. The minister's speech was most interesting, because he identified all the programs the government has introduced, with the various types of funding to help our young people achieve their potential.

So before talking off the top of his head, perhaps the hon. member should listen to what the government says and consider the commitments it has made. We are aware of our responsibility to Canadian youth and act accordingly.

My question to the hon. member is this: He knows perfectly well that the Speech from the Throne emphasized—he said so himself that illiteracy was a major problem in this country—so does he admit that in the Speech from the Throne, the government made fighting illiteracy a priority? Our objective is to make sure that at least 90 per cent of our young people are able to get a high school diploma. We want 90 per cent of our young students to graduate from high school. Does he agree with those objectives?

[English]

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker, the member says I am concerned about my performance in the House while giving speeches which, I must assume, is a message that the performance has been good. A good performance convinces nobody. Let me respond to the question.

The answer is that his government has not stated any goals at all. The government has not stated any goals at all. If the government had a goal of eliminating illiteracy, if the government had a goal of doubling the number of science graduates, if the government had a goal of increasing the number of workers who achieve a level of training by twice, I would be solidly in favour of those goals. But this government does not have goals. Remember the goal of the Prime Minister that this government should achieve a rate of expenditure on science and technology of 2.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. That was not stated as a goal and therefore it was not achieved.

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When this government states goals rather than promises, and therefore understands that a goal must have a mechanism, a strategy for its achievement, then I will be very enthusiastic. But this is strictly sheer trickery just as was the Prime Minister's promise with respect to R and D. This is trickery with respect to education.

If those were goals I would accept them, but those are not goals, those are empty promises like jobs, jobs, jobs.

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating a very important issue to this nation, youth unemployment. It is important, may I add, for many reasons, however, because this summer our young people are faced with an increasing unemployment rate among youth that stands at a devastating 16.6 per cent.

This is a very important debate because we have young people in this nation today who are demoralized and frustrated with their present situation.

• (1230)

What is equally important is that we begin to analyse the response presented to these young people by this government. The government response was basically that in its SEED program in 1985 it contributed \$149 million, while in 1991, \$80 million.

This comes at a time when this government has decided to take on a challenge, to speak to the issue of global competitiveness and speak to the creation of a so-called learning society. However, I wonder at times whether this government really understands the meaning of global competition because it seems to me that its answer to creating a globally competitive society is to tell young people to stay at home. Obviously the reality is otherwise.

I think the word competitiveness has entered the vocabulary of this government. Perhaps some media guru is telling the government it is a vogue word, a word used in Europe many years ago and a word acted on many years ago.

I think there is a fundamental problem with this government in understanding how a globally competitive society is achieved. It is not achieved by cutting resources like training and education in the field of human resources, nor by cutting research and development, science and technology. Obviously it has not been able to develop a global competitive society in this area and in many other areas including that of taxation.