

benefits for northern Canadians and, most of all, to quit picking on those Canadians who are least able to fight back.

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#### MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's):** Madam Speaker, I want to be among the first to congratulate the new Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on behalf of the plant workers and fishermen in Atlantic Canada, and to welcome him to what is going to be a very difficult job.

For a brief period I was one of his critics in his former capacity in Consumer and Corporate Affairs. I quickly came to respect his grasp of issues and admire his capacity to be the advocate for those issues.

He comes to the fisheries portfolio at a very difficult time, a time of great crisis. I believe he has what has been sorely missing from that portfolio—an ability to have an understanding of the issue and to be a strong voice for those issues in Cabinet.

His job is going to be all the more difficult because the Cabinet has overlooked the problem completely by leaving it out of the federal budget altogether.

The crisis can be solved with his leadership. He is going to have to do something in terms of a compensation program for fishermen. He is going to need a strong voice to advocate that Cabinet gets tough with the foreigners, kick them out of our waters so our people can be the beneficiaries of our resources.

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#### ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

#### THE BUDGET

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. I might say that many Canadians will be surprised and somewhat disappointed after his budget last Tuesday to see him still in his place.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Gray (Windsor West):** In his budget the minister announced cuts of \$7.3 billion in payments to the

#### Oral Questions

provinces for health care and education. The minister has given no indication that he has even bothered to consult with the provinces on the impact these reductions will have on these essential national programs.

When the minister sat on this side of the House in 1982 he called for conferences by the government of the day with the provinces to establish national objectives. In so doing he said that this has to be done "before we cut spending and before we cause closures of hospitals and cutbacks in post-secondary education". That is what the minister said.

Yet his budget will likely take us back to the bad old days of user fees and extra billing, attacks on the weak, the elderly and the sick.

Again, in this House in 1982, the minister said: "Let us not make hospitals, universities and colleges a battleground between the federal government and the provincial governments". That is what the minister said. I ask him: Why is not now taking his own advice?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, first, may I say I do appreciate very much the gracious good wishes of the Leader of the Opposition. It is what I would expect from him.

The hon. member has raised the question of the transfers to provinces. As I have said in this House before, we are not asking the provinces to make a large adjustment. In the first year, it is somewhere between one-half of 1 per cent, three-quarters of 1 per cent, and about 1-1/4 per cent in the second year. These are not major adjustments that are required of the provinces.

I would remind the hon. member that in 1977 the law was changed by the government of the day, a government which he supported, which removed the linkage between those transfers to post-secondary education and health care. It was done at the request of the provinces so that they could have the flexibility to spend them as they wished.

I think the hon. member would agree with me that in some cases the provinces have cut way back on the amount of post-secondary education. If you cut those same ratios, as we saw back in 1977, you would see that the federal government is supporting in some cases a very high proportion of post-secondary education.