

Oral Questions

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I do very much value the hon. member's advice. I certainly value the fact that he speaks for students from across Canada.

I would point out to them all that nobody speaks for students across Canada better than this government has.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. McDougall: I want to point out that a good part of what is happening in the stay-in-school initiative and in the Challenge program is that it is going to be very much a hands-on program. It is going to be an extension of some of the things that we have been doing now, which includes things like co-op education and other things that I think the hon. member would approve of.

It is very important for our young people that they stay in school throughout high school or they will never get to the post-secondary level. The extra education they get by staying in school, particularly in the less developed regions of the country, will help us in terms of our regional development as well.

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UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the same minister.

I would like to ask the minister why the report by her advisory committee entitled *Regional Unemployment in Canada—A Nation out of Balance*, which was completed in November, was not tabled and presented to the Canadian people until February of this year.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it is up to the advisory council to publish the report whenever it chooses. I was presented with the report last week. It has some interesting ideas in it. When I have had a chance to examine it further, I will be happy to report to the House.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, the minister's senior officials were involved in this study. They knew last November how the VIA cuts, the unemployment insurance cuts and the post-secondary education cuts were hurting Canadians. Why was that kept a secret from Canadians?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, that sounded like the same question to me. Let me see if I can phrase my answer another way.

The report that was developed by the advisory council and presented to me last week was in the hands of the advisory council. I would hate to think that it was in the hands of my officials because it is an independent council. I think the hon. member would agree that that is the way it should be.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. It concerns the farm debt review boards which have been performing a very valuable farm debt intermediation service, but whose mandate is scheduled to expire at the end of March 1991.

Noting this date, a number of valuable farm debt review board employees and counsellors are naturally concerned about their future employment. Given the ongoing need for the farm debt review boards and the expertise of the personnel, can the minister indicate his intention to extend the mandate of the farm debt review boards past March 1991?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the farm debt review board has been a very successful concept. I believe something in the order of 70 per cent-plus of all the applications that were brought before the farm debt review board have been resolved. I believe something in excess of 8,000 different applications were brought before it.

On the basis of the success that the program has had, we would be very supportive of its continuation.

I have to advise my hon. colleague, as he is well aware, that there is a major review of agriculture policy being undertaken. One of the areas in which we are engaged in the review of is with respect to farm management and financing.