

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the member for his question.

As I stated in my opening remarks, the minister responsible for human resources is calling for a debate where we advance ideas on how we can take the current \$38 billion expenditure and redesign it in a way that we can get a better bang for the taxpayers' buck.

I believe that education is paramount in this debate. No one is questioning that. In fact there are no further cuts. It is a redesign of the current system.

I share the member's view. Education is something to which we must continually commit ourselves and of course the R and D that the member mentioned as well.

• (1550)

In order to make sure that the resources are there, to make sure our educational system can handle not only the R and D aspect but also make sure that our younger people have access, we have to create an economy where they have income so that they can afford to pay for their tuition rather than take student loans. The greatest problem that our young people have had, especially in the last three years, is they have not been able to get decent work to pay for their university education. The whole economy has been flat.

The member knows full well that if we can create a more vibrant economy where younger people can get work it does not take long for a student, working part time and in the summer, to raise \$6,000, \$7,000 or \$8,000 a year which goes a long way toward paying for his or her education.

We are going to have to put more emphasis on the macro economy rather than just the old system where we would automatically write cheques.

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's comments.

I want to state categorically that the question of status quo is not only unique to Quebec, as I found from travelling with the pre-budget consultation hearings on the finance committee. It is a preoccupation throughout Canada from one coast to the other.

I would like to bring to the attention of my hon. colleague two valid ideas that surfaced from a workshop in my riding this week on the reform of human resources. One was that small business people who are unemployed and try to start up a business find that they cannot collect unemployment insurance. The suggestion was brought forward that perhaps a person who is on unemployment insurance should be allowed to collect their benefits at the same time as starting up a business.

The other question I would like the hon. member to comment on is this. He mentioned the need for assistance for women in business. Another suggestion from our workshop was that the older group, the 55 year plus, have a wealth of experience and cannot find jobs. They would be willing to work 5 to 15 hours a week to help the women that he mentioned and youth who want to start up small businesses. Could he put in his idea the concept of allowing older people to give the benefit of their experience to the young and the women to start up their businesses? Could he not consider these two ideas in his proposal also?

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Madam Speaker, I want to say to my colleague this is when a debate becomes most enjoyable. We are advancing ideas. We are building on ideas.

The idea of taking a counsellor assistance program, not unlike the one in the Federal Business Development Bank, and marrying that with the youth and my pet project, women in business, is a great way to go. That is a way of using up the great wisdom and experience that exists from people who have taken perhaps early retirement from a 70 to 80 hour a week job but want to only work 10 or 12 hours a week.

I would certainly support that idea. It is a great one. That is the kind of thing I believe our minister needs to hear.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the hon. parliamentary secretary's comments, especially with regard to his grandmother and the eight children.

I have two questions stemming from that. The first one is a question on welfare and whether he thinks there is a possibility that had welfare, as it is now, been available to his grandmother that instead of finding her own way she might have gone on to welfare and become a burden to taxpayers. That is the first question.

• (1555)

The second question is about programs for women. Had it been your grandfather with the eight children in the same situation, the same difficulty, would he have been any less deserving than your grandmother?

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Madam Speaker, first I want to answer the question about welfare.

I knew my grandmother because she looked after me. Probably she would have figured out a way to avoid the welfare option. However that is my own declared bias for my grandmother. Maybe she could have fallen into that trap as well.

That is one of the real problems we have in our society today. The system is set up in such a way that it becomes the thing to do, and people are not challenged to their depths in terms of their work ethic or their creativity. We have to redesign this program in a way that the basic inner strength of people, their creative