

Oral Questions

campaign, having known the extent of the national deficit, having known that interest rates were going up, why did he not come clean with Canadians then rather than telling them now suddenly that we have a debt problem?

An Hon. Member: You are still a loser, John.

Mr. Simmonds: Your nose is getting longer.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): The nose of the Hon. Member from Newfoundland is right across the floor of this House. It is so long from the things that he has been saying.

Let me give the Leader of the Opposition a simple—no, no, we will give him a simple lesson. We will give the Leader of the Opposition a simple method in fiscal policy, something that he never learned when he was the Minister of Finance himself. The Hon. Member says that the debt has gone up during our term of office.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Double the money.

An Hon. Member: More than double.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I ask the Members opposite, why does the debt go up?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): You tell us.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): The debt goes up because there are annual deficits. We have brought the deficit down every year since we have been in office.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): And if the Hon. Member, the Leader of the Opposition, is so concerned—the Leader of the Opposition knows what a wooden nickel is because that is all he has been handing around for the last four years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IMPACT OF HIGH INTEREST RATES ON ERDA PROGRAMS

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The Governor of the Bank of Canada has recognized that the high interest rates policy that this Government has been pursuing has a particularly adverse impact on the less affluent regions of Canada. He has urged the Government to offset that adverse impact with regional development assistance. Regional development programs have, however, either been suspended or cut by this Government, not increased to offset the impact of high interest rates. Will the Minister assure Canadians today

that regional development programs will be fully maintained?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): The Hon. Member understands that the day before a Budget, I cannot get into things that are possibly going to be referred to in that Budget. For that reason he knows that I cannot give an answer to that. But the point that I want to make is that we on this side of the House understand that the right way to get the interests rates in this country down is to follow good economic policies, policies that are going to lead to a reduction in the inflationary pressures, and that will get down the interest rates on a permanent basis. That will lead to a healthier economy.

CUTS IN PROGRAMS IN ATLANTIC CANADA

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has said that we must wait for the Budget to hear about regional development programs being cut, but the fact is that in Atlantic Canada, for example, regional development subsidiary agreements have already been suspended or terminated in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. Those are not programs for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, they are programs for joint federal-provincial funding. Will the Minister assure Canadians today, without waiting for the Budget, that federal support for these programs will be restored and fully maintained?

• (1430)

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I do not know that that question is any different from the previous question. The answer is still the same.

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FISHERIES

FISH PROCESSING INDUSTRY IN B.C.—EFFECT OF GATT REGULATIONS ON JOBS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister for International Trade, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. In today's *Canada Gazette* there is a regulatory announcement that will directly and negatively affect 7,500 existing jobs in British Columbia.

My question pertains to a commitment made by the Government of Canada in the fall of 1987, following a GATT ruling on the West Coast fishery in which the then Minister of Fisheries made the following promise to me in the House about fish processing jobs: "Fish processing jobs are not going to be jeopardized in any way". This was repeated by the Minister for International Trade last spring.