

*Oral Questions*

most important objectives of the government, it is imperative that it should not be done at the expense of the education of our young people. Today's student demonstration on the Hill underlines this principle.

More than 900,000 full time post-secondary students could be directly affected by the government's proposal to cut back on transfer payments earmarked for post-secondary education to the provinces. The present level of funding for post-secondary education must be maintained to academically and technically equip young Canadians as they head into the 21st century.

As the red book states, the government has a direct interest in ensuring that our young people have the best possible opportunity to gain the skills and knowledge needed to lead productive and self-sufficient lives. This noble principle must be followed through.

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**LAW OF THE SEA**

**Mr. Derek Wells (South Shore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 12 years ago the United Nations law of the sea treaty was adopted. Today that treaty comes into force.

This treaty, which took over 10 years to negotiate, provides Canada with sovereign rights for exploring and exploiting the natural resources of approximately 1,500,000 square kilometres of continental shelf off our Arctic, Pacific and Atlantic coasts. The treaty also gives Canada jurisdiction over the living resources within a 200 mile limit.

Although the treaty is now in force and many of its provisions have been implemented in state practice and accepted as customary international law, over 70 countries including Canada have yet to ratify it.

Over the past year Canada has taken steps beyond this treaty to protect its fish stocks. Perhaps now we should consider playing a leading role in calling for and participating in the widespread ratification of this treaty.

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[Translation]

**SOCIAL PROGRAM REFORM**

**Mr. Raymond Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, six weeks have gone by since the green paper on social reform was published. Canadians are fully involved in the debate.

● (1415)

The Department of Human Resources Development has received 12,000 telephone inquiries. One hundred and fourteen thousand copies of the green book, including 33,000 in French, and 210,000 summaries have been distributed. Since late October, 190 members of Parliament have held public consultations in their ridings and 80 national organizations have appeared before the parliamentary committee.

Canadians know that changes are needed. They want to get involved and they want to debate ideas. The government is ready to listen to all Canadians.

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[English]

**POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the federal Liberals' review of social programs is giving every indication that funding to universities and colleges throughout Canada will be cut and the individual cost to post-secondary students will increase.

Saskatchewan Premier Roy Romanow said of the federal government: "From our point of view the federal government is saying that debt is no good for government but it is okay for students".

Yesterday my colleague from Winnipeg Transcona reminded us that as a nation we are expecting Canada's young people to pay off a national debt not of their making and now it seems we encourage them to accumulate personal debt as well in the process.

If education, knowledge and skills are required to provide the basis for a healthy economy, the role of government must include ways to increase accessibility to the institutions that can make education, knowledge and skills available.

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[Translation]

**POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there is a big demonstration today of students who are rightly concerned about the impact of social program reform on the funding of post-secondary education. By cutting transfers to the provinces, the federal government will force a substantial rise in tuition fees and seriously restrict access to university education.

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Since the students' concerns are well founded and given the extent of the criticism of his reform, does the minister promise today to reconsider his government's intention for financing post-secondary education?

[English]

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, in the green book we present several options. One is to continue with the existing status quo, a formula that was put in place by a government of which he was a member which reduced transfer