

We all share the vision of the Speech from the Throne for a prosperous and united Canada. I invite hon. members from both sides to join us in implementing the measures that will keep that vision alive, and make it a reality.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to say to the new minister that I listened to his words carefully.

There was hardly a sentence that I did not disagree with. How does the minister expect this competitiveness, this globalization and all the things that he described in his speech to happen? How does he expect them to happen when we have a dollar that is inflated, when we have interest rates that are crippling us and when we have a tax system that most businessmen in the world think is the most complicated?

How does he expect fairness, conciliation and action to come about in our economy when we are faced with underpinnings that are so difficult to work with?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I am delighted to hear that the hon. member does agree.

I know from the discussions that he and I have had on a number of occasions that there is a lot of common ground between us.

He has raised issues about the Canadian dollar and about interest rates. He knows that the policies we are following of decreasing the deficit and controlling inflation are key to lowering interest rates.

We have to ensure that Canadians can look forward to lower deficits. The Leader of the Opposition talked earlier about the problem of debt. He and I agree on the problem of debt.

The only way to decrease the debt is to decrease deficits. That requires some tough decisions, but decreasing those deficits will help us lower interest rates and place Canadian businesses in a position where they can compete.

The key point that must be remembered here is that we cannot only focus on some of the issues that the hon. member has mentioned and forget about the issues that I stressed in my remarks such as science and technology, education, training—the continuous learning experience—the environment, the relationship between business and labour, incentives for investment, and all of these

things which are very important elements in the competitive position of a country.

• (1140)

If we only focus on some of these high profile issues and forget about the others, then we are going to lose the game. That is going to be the essence of the discussion paper and the consultation process that flows from that: how we as Canadians working together can improve our performance in that regard.

It is not just governments that can do that. It is business, labour, educators, provincial governments, municipal governments all working together with one common objective of improving our competitive position.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the minister's comments in terms of making a case for the need for increased competitiveness for the Canadian economy and his reference particularly to support for retraining and education and research and development.

I thought back a few weeks to when we had lobbyists on Parliament Hill from universities, particularly in terms of educational funding for universities and research in a whole variety of areas. Their comments were that over the years the government had actually cut back on the traditional support that it provided for post-secondary education in terms of limiting transfer payments and so on.

I suppose the minister is serious, but does he not think there is a certain hollowness in his comments when he stands and says that this government now is concerned with doing all of these things? Yet would he not have to admit that its record shows that this government has not followed through in supporting research and development, that this government has not followed through with support for post-secondary education and retraining programs.

I know that in my own constituency we have a long list of people who want to get retraining programs launched and there is simply no money there.

While I say the minister is not necessarily being insincere, it must be recognized that there is a certain amount of hypocrisy in what he is saying.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am sure my hon. friend would agree that we have to get interest rates down. Interest rates have come down about five percentage points since this time last year, but we have to get interest rates down further. One of those ways is