

Oral Questions

SIZE OF OFFSHORE INVESTMENT

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, there was a time when the Minister actually answered questions. I wish he would return to that practice.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I just answered the question.

Mr. Broadbent: Considering that there was a 12 per cent increase of investment in Canada in the past year, and an outflow increase of 29 per cent, will the Minister be candid with the House and acknowledge that it is the outflow investment increase of 29 per cent—or \$4.9 billion—which is the main structural problem with the Canadian economy? Speculators understand that, which is why they are investing abroad instead of in Canada.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying which states that statistics can lie—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: They're your statistics, your figures, fella!

Mr. Gauthier: You're the expert, Michael.

Mr. Rodriguez: You're really original, Mike!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please? Will the Hon. Minister complete his answer briefly, please.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, I will give the Hon. Member a very brief answer.

The Hon. Member has displayed great adeptness over the months at being able to fiddle around with apples-and-oranges comparisons.

Mr. Broadbent: They're your figures!

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): He is using my figures, yes. But he is twisting them around in the most distorted way I have ever seen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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THE BUDGET

CRUDE OIL PRICE FORECASTS

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Minister of Finance would be interested in some statistics which do not lie. The price of west Texas intermediate crude, on which Canadian oil prices are based, has dropped to \$13,26 U.S. a barrel. Canada earns more than \$7 billion selling oil to the U.S. What will be the cost to the Canadian Treasury, and the effect on the Minister's projected deficit, given that the Budget's projection of \$22.50 U.S. a barrel is totally and wildly inaccurate?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think this is the fifth time this question has been asked.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): The price goes down every day.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): The very wise Leader of the Opposition is saying that the price goes down every day. What does that do to the economy, he asks.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): What does that do to your projections?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I will tell the Hon. Member what it does to the economy. It increases the spending power of Canadians. It increases the competitiveness of Canadian industry. That creates economic growth, which generates a great deal of revenue for the federal Treasury, revenue which will offset the drop in the price of oil. So there is a two-way street here and, as I have said on many occasions, there is a balance which is slightly in favour of the Treasury of Canada as it relates to taxes.

Mr. Speaker: Questions and answers are becoming longer. Just a question, please.

EFFECT ON OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Finance agree with the assessment of Deacon Hodgson that Canada's oil and gas industry will lose \$9.1 billion in revenue this year and that financing for tar sands of offshore development will be impossible to acquire under the current fiscal regime? Can the Minister give us an answer for a change, rather than rhetoric?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have tried to answer the questions of the Hon. Member on many occasions. I say to him again: Yes, there are some negatives as a result of the price of oil. I have never denied that. With his very blinkered-like approach to the subject, the Hon. Member ignores the benefits of lower oil prices. Could he answer this question for Canadians who are watching? Why is it that members of his Party have been pressing for lower oil prices? The big reason is because lower oil prices benefit consumers. It will give them more money to spend on other things that will generate economic activity and will generate—

● (1430)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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THE ECONOMY

INVESTMENT ABROAD—EFFECT ON EXCHANGE VALUE OF DOLLAR

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Finance. Does the Minister