

The Budget

One resident of Richelieu in my riding of Chambly, a farmer, told me the Wilson budget is a little like a man who brings his family to a restaurant, tells them to order whatever they wish, eats and drinks more than anybody else and is quite content, but sneaks out when time comes to pick up the tab. He is nowhere to be found. That may happen once or twice, perhaps, but after that people will no longer be tempted to share a table with that man. That is how that farmer sees the Wilson Budget.

As far as I am concerned, I see the Budget in the context of the social contract that we, the voters, have with the government. Obviously, I am referring to the social contract which Jean-Jacques Rousseau described as a relationship between the government and the people that should be based on freedom and equality. And I find that the Wilson Budget violates that social contract for different reasons.

In Quebec, for example, there is the GST. I have listened to my hon. colleague for Montmorency—D'Orléans. I admire him for his command of the French language and his so wonderful accent from Orléans Island, but I cannot agree with him on the GST because it seems that in my constituency, the GST is now turning the middle class into and endangered species. It is an unnecessary tax for we have other means of balancing the budget.

• (1600)

The cuts in federal transfer payments to provinces threaten the health of seniors. I have talked with seniors in retirement homes in my riding and these people's concerns are very real. They fear the GST, but that's not all. When I think about the social context in which we live, I fear for seniors, for middle-class people, for our youth, for our students. I think that with the cuts in transfer payments to the province of Quebec, we are mortgaging the future of our youth, especially with regards to postsecondary education. This will have disastrous consequences for our society in Quebec.

So the government puts the burden on middle-class Canadians, who are directly affected by the GST, on seniors and on our youth. Very few people escape these measures.

What a reward for Quebecers! Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister of Finance had a choice. I still remember, some time ago, when he said: "You had the choice". He

was talking to Mr. Turner. But this time, it was the Tories' turn to choose. They could have presented an honorable budget respectful of all Canadian citizens, a fair and equitable budget. But they chose not to. It would have been possible because my Conservative friends always ask what are the alternatives. I can name a few. Instead of increasing the defence budget by 5 per cent, they could have cut it by 10 per cent. The US Pentagon has already decided to go that way.

Having spent three years in the armed forces, I know we could save a lot of money in the Defence Department. Sure we could save money, up to \$1.2 billion. If we lowered interest rates by two per cent, we could reduce our deficit by \$6,2 billion in three years. But I do not ask for the Bank of Canada Governor's resignation because I do not want to stir up a constitutional crisis. However, I think that the government could try to convince him to lower interest rates by at least a few points because right now, there is a five point difference between Canadian and American rates. Never has there been such a gap. It makes for a dangerous situation!

I agree with this proposal made by members of other parties. I remember that even Mr. Chrétien from the Liberal Party said that interest rates should come down.

I am not saying that this idea only come from the New Democrats, or only from the Liberal Party. Even Mr. Bourassa, the premier of Quebec, agrees and he is an economist.

I think you will find there is a consensus on the interest rates being too high and that the Conservatives and this government not having the monopoly of truth should ask themselves: Have we made a mistake here? That's it! Ask yourselves that question instead of saying: Ah, we made the tough decisions, the unpopular decisions. You should not wear a lapel badge saying that you are unpopular because people do not understand you. I for one believe that you are not popular because people understand you too well. They understand that your budget is not in their interest.

Another thing that could be done with this budget would be to levy a minimum corporate tax. I was sitting here and heard the Minister of Finance say: Listen, that is difficult because how can we possibly rate small- and medium-sized companies, major corporations and so on? I think that decision has already been made in the United States; and we have seen precious few American