

Main Estimates

Madam Speaker: Does the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) have a statement?

Mr. Anguish: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The hon. member for The Battlefords-Meadow Lake (Mr. Anguish).

Mr. Doug Anguish (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Madam Speaker, I should like to say in my rookie observations as a member of Parliament that there is clearly no difference between the Conservative side of the House and the Liberal side of the House in the fact that the hon. member in opposition is asking the very same questions that were asked of him when he was president of the treasury board.

An hon. Member: Right on.

Mr. Beatty: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Anguish: Also I should like to say that I am disappointed that I see the hon. member, in trying to question the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston), was given a copy of the estimates—

An hon. Member: You are out of order.

Mr. Anguish: —to which I had no access and could not peruse while the minister was making his statement so that I could intelligently respond to him.

The estimates which have been tabled before us today seem to indicate that the government intends to approach some things in a relatively new way and other things in the same old way as it always has. Last night's alleged budget and the tabling of these estimates today indicate—

Mr. Beatty: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member asked for the floor on a point of order. He has not offered any point of order and he appears to be making a statement at this point.

Madam Speaker: The hon. member asked for the floor in order to make a statement, and that is the reason for which I gave him the floor. Since the hon. member for York-Peel did not have a statement and was asking questions, I decided to hear the hon. member for The Battlefords-Meadow Lake on his statement.

Mr. Beatty: The record will show something else.

Mr. Anguish: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last night—

Mr. Stevens: A point of order, Madam Speaker. To be abundantly clear, I trust that I will have the right to finish my line of questioning following this statement.

Mr. Knowles: Certainly.

Madam Speaker: Yes, I will give the hon. member the floor afterwards for the purpose of asking his questions.

Mr. Anguish: It is nice to know that the older members always try to assist a younger member or a member not as experienced in the House and help them present the points of view of the constituents and the people of Canada which they represent.

An hon. Member: Order.

Mr. Anguish: Last night's alleged budget and the tabled estimates today indicate their new approach, as I was mentioning. Last night's presentation, I think, could be called the "Mac mini-budget", and today's estimates could be called the "maybe estimates" as well. In fact, if the truth be known, had the Liberals done their homework, they would have had time since the vote in December to produce policies consistent with reducing interest rates, tax cuts and other measures to stimulate the economy.

The estimates presented to this House are supposed to represent what I think is the intention of the government. What do they do? Well, we see first that the Liberals have immediately fallen into their old habit of refusing to plan at all. I think we need long-term planning. I suggest that these are ways the government could make the workings of government more efficient and more accountable to the people of Canada. We need a long-term plan which incorporates the use of public servants properly, thereby using them efficiently, not a cutting of the person-years as suggested by the estimates by a large number, the 5,840 person-year reduction. Those people could perhaps be used more efficiently within this government.

What about the energy policy that is alluded to? I can certainly agree with the minister's contention that we require the estimates early to get on with the business of government, but surely we do not have to go with estimates which have oil compensation payments based on the previous government's oil pricing strategy, a strategy that has been repudiated not only by the government but by the Canadian people in the last election. At that time Canadians said that they wanted a made-in-Canada price, but it seems that we cannot have this until we can have it made by Canadians themselves.

For some time now we have been receiving hints that the government may be raising its own energy prices higher than it would have had us believe during the election campaign. Perhaps it is part of their strategy to break another promise and to deceive the people of Canada by sneaking in higher energy prices through the back door.

What about the unemployment insurance which is alluded to in the report of the President of the Treasury Board? The Liberals, in these estimates and in their statements outside of the House, have indicated their intention to proceed with the Conservative's plan to switch the cost of manpower programs and even more of the unemployment insurance program directly to premiums. I think the government should be responsible enough to accept the legislation enacted earlier whereby when unemployment reached 4 per cent, it is the responsibility of the government to absorb cost. It is the government's policies that are responsible for creating unemployment, and in view of that