

was the creation of a joint committee on the financial situation. The Bloc Quebecois would have participated and we could have studied possible solutions together, out in the open. The government refused.

Given that situation, we took a different approach. We proposed solutions to the Standing Committee on Finance. We asked that government pass legislation to prohibit family trusts as we know them today, because they are tax havens for a privileged few in our society. These are real solutions. There are billions of dollars in those trusts.

Here in this House, and also in committee, we suggested that the government should focus more on finance and tax control. I have just spent the last ten minutes talking about taxes. Just think that there are now \$6.6 billion in unpaid taxes which delinquent taxpayers will not pay; \$6 billion is a lot of money and the interest on such an amount adds up to more millions. We asked the government to provide for stricter controls on those overdue accounts.

We asked the government to look into the issue of businesses, tens of thousands of businesses, which have not paid taxes over the last ten years, in spite of profits earned in Canada. Why do we allow those companies to profit from such a tax exemption system, albeit a legal one? That is not normal; all taxpayers, corporations as well as individuals, should pay their fair share of taxes in Canada. That is another solution that we proposed to the government.

We also proposed to slim down the government machinery. We talked about that many times. We also asked the government to avoid duplication in the various administration sectors, duplication of provincial and federal spending in the same areas.

• (1710)

These are suggestions that we made to the federal government and, each time, we were met with an outright refusal. Why? Because in each of these solutions, the government saw an opportunity to decentralize its powers to the provinces, which it does not want to do, because its leitmotiv is to further centralize powers and to leave the provinces with their problems.

It is clear today that this government does not intend to make concessions to the provinces. On the contrary, it intends to give them more responsibilities, without the tax points which would go with those responsibilities.

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to say a few words on the opposition's motion, which reads as follows:

That this House call upon the government in its next budget to avoid any tax increases targeting low and middle-income taxpayers and to consider instead trimming the fat from the government, eliminating tax expenditures which

### *Supply*

primarily benefit large corporations and wealthy Canadians and collecting on unpaid tax debts owed to the federal government.

It seems a bit strange that the opposition should feel the need, on the eve of the government's second budget, to ask it to think about getting off the backs of the disadvantaged and the unemployed and start spreading the wealth more equitably.

However, the government has never stopped talking, in its electoral promises and in the red book it waved about throughout the entire electoral campaign, about equity and tax reform. It always defined itself as the protector of the ordinary citizen. It spoke of balance. It spoke of redistributing the country's wealth. Yet, since it has been in office, it has done just the opposite.

Is this surprising behaviour from a Liberal government? Is it surprising that a government led by old crocks like the Prime Minister and the Minister of External Affairs, old political hacks, who have always backed down on their electoral commitments, who have always reneged on their promises?

Let us go back a bit in the history of this moribund party. A party without a soul, that fails to keep its promises, interested only in staying in power to fatten up the friends of the regime, and let them take a turn at the trough. This has always been the Liberal party style.

Do you remember, in the 1970s, when Robert Standfield promised in an election campaign, as the head of the Conservative party, that he would freeze wages and prices, and Pierre Trudeau, the head of the Liberal Party, said wages and prices should never be frozen? He was elected on this promise. What did he do six months after? Just the opposite of what he said he was going to do: he froze wages and prices. That is the Liberal party, for you: two different messages, one for the elections, another for once they are elected.

Once they are elected, the promises are forgotten. Everything is forgotten. The red book becomes a red, blue or green paper depending on the occasion, and electoral commitments become simply good intentions that, unfortunately, the current economic situation obliges them to put off—like the postponement of the Axworthy reform or the promises to help the disadvantaged.

Do you also remember, in the 1980s, when the Conservatives brought down a budget providing for an 18 cent increase in the price of gasoline, what the Liberals did?

• (1715)

There was an historic vote, which in fact defeated that government on the pretext that an 18 cent increase in the price of gasoline was unacceptable. The Liberals said: "If we are voted back into office, there will be no increase in gas prices. We will exert better control over government spending. We will decrease the number of unemployed. All in all, we will reduce the deficit which has reached \$13 billion". Once again, we believed them. Very naive, in the opinion of many Quebecers and Canadians,