

The Budget—Mr. Wilson

Mr. Kristiansen: Mr. Speaker, after listening to the Hon. Member from Etobicoke, I think that we now clearly know where he and his Party stand on the matter of debt and deficits. That basically is that Canada should not borrow from the Bank of Canada at relatively low cost in the same way that Japan has done but rather that Crown corporations, the provinces and municipalities should be forced to borrow abroad from foreign markets at high costs in the same way that Mexico, Poland and some other countries which are going bankrupt have done. That seems to be the policy of the Conservative Party and is increasingly becoming the policy of the Government, because it has echoed that theme throughout its entire Budget. It is a Conservative economic statement.

I would like to ask the Hon. Member for Etobicoke Centre (Mr. Wilson) a question. Now that we clearly know his stand on economic policy is to lead us on the road to bankruptcy, what is his position and that of his Party on matters of social policy? Does he subscribe to the means test as does the Leader of the Conservative Party or does he subscribe rather to the "mean, nasty and terrible things" test of the Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) who is the finance critic for the Conservative Party?

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, what the Hon. Member has just said has totally distorted and totally misrepresented what I said in my remarks a few minutes ago. I made absolutely no reference to the fact that the policy of this Party is to force the provinces, the municipalities or the corporations to borrow externally.

Mr. Kristiansen: That is the result.

Mr. Wilson: If he says that that is the result, his understanding of economics is smaller than I thought it was, because the result of cutting back on federal government borrowing in Canada would be to free up the market for the provinces, the municipalities and the corporations so that they would not have to borrow abroad. That is the direction in which we are trying to go. We want to have less of an external exposure and put more of our domestic savings not into paying the day-to-day bills of the Government but into financing the development of new technologies and startups of new small businesses, which would result, as I hope the Hon. Member would understand, in more job creation. Admittedly, it is job creation by the private sector and he would not enjoy that, but it would result in more jobs being created by the private sector, and surely that is something that he can accept.

Mr. Parent: Mr. Speaker, I rise at the risk of being berated by the Hon. Member for Etobicoke Centre (Mr. Wilson). He might consider me just a small town boy who does not know too much about economics. My question is quite straightforward. In view of the fact that the Hon. Member has stated that the number one problem in the country is the deficit, would he please put into perspective for me what his feelings are on unemployment?

Second, I wonder if he would address himself specifically to the problem of cutbacks with regard to the social programs. By

that I mean, would he cut back on medicare? He said that he would cut back across the board, but I simply want to get it into perspective here. Would he indeed cut back on medicare and on pensions? If the answer to that is yes, then I believe that he will be at loggerheads with what his Party stands for. Could he please clarify that for me?

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the Hon. Member should in any way belittle his knowledge of economics by saying: "I am just a small town boy, I don't know too much about economics". In many cases, it is the small town boys who use good, sound common sense in addressing the economic problems and who have a far better and clearer understanding of the directions we should be taking. I hope that he will not move away from his small town traditions when addressing the economic problems that we are facing.

He asked me to address the question of cutting expenditures for social programs. We made it quite clear that we will not cut spending on medicare. In fact, my colleagues have said that we would increase the commitment that we have made to medicare. Referring to education, as I indicated in my remarks earlier, upgrading of our human resources, education, training and retraining are key priorities, so no, there would be no cuts there. I can answer the question that he has asked quite clearly.

Mr. Skelly: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could continue the theme that was started by the previous speaker. It is interesting to note the fixation on the deficit and the determination to cut spending in Canada that the previous speaker and many people in his Party have. In my eyes it is a given that one of the largest blocks of spending that is the responsibility of any Party which forms a government is in the area of health programs, social programs and education. It is a given that if we are to maintain the quality of life in the country, there is a desperate need to maintain those programs. The Armed Forces account for a very large portion of the spending in the country, and the Conservative Party is obviously committed to that. Just exactly where are those cuts going to take place?

The Canadian people do not want the kind of double talk in which the previous speaker and his Party are indulging. How about some hard figures? Let him stand up and show some guts. Where are they going to cut spending? What can women in Canada expect who are having some difficulty with equality? What can native people expect from the proposals the Hon. Member put forward? What can young people expect who are having a terrible time and who are extremely dependent on education, social and health care programs? Exactly where would the previous speaker and his Party make cuts in the Budget? Who would he harm?

● (1610)

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I cannot really understand the direction of these questions. The Hon. Member did not listen to what I was saying and he does not accept that the most important economic problem we are facing is the size of the deficit and the fact that 22 per cent of government spending