

The Budget

of a sudden? What happened immediately after the election that we became pre-occupied with deficit?

The member mentioned concrete cuts and we are also interested in concrete cuts, but I understand in the lock-up this morning that it was very general, very vague. I would be interested in the member's comments about how concrete the cuts are and how specific they are.

As far as the "no tax increase", surely the member would agree that there is only one taxpayer and whether he or she pays taxes at the municipal, provincial, or federal level it is a tax increase regardless, and there are not going to be cuts across the board or else we will do without hospital beds and education.

To end my comments, I will just ask one question. Should not each sector be responsible for his or her own governments, own area, or own department? Should not the federal government have become responsible for its own area and not shift the blame to the other levels of government?

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): A very short comment from the hon. member for Terrebonne.

Mr. Robitaille: Madam Speaker, as for the election in Chambly, I think that the hon. member cannot doubt that— Yes, I welcome the new member for Chambly, but I am eager to hear him explain his position on Meech Lake. We are waiting for it here.

In his little talk, the hon. member said—for which I thank him—that the Conservatives and Liberals seem to be accusing each other back and forth and that the New Democratic Party is the only party not involved in creating the debt. I think that the hon. member will recall very well what the New Democrats did when we had a minority Liberal government, what orientation it gave to the Liberal Party, which might not have been strong enough to stand on its own two feet then. Furthermore, luckily we never had a New Democratic government in power because, hearing them talk in committees, calling for new programs, new services, wanting to run people's lives and decide what is good for

them, I assure you that the bill would be quite a bit higher than it is now.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I must interrupt the hon. member; the time for comments and questions has now expired. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Axworthy).

[*English*]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Madam Speaker, in a budget debate an opposition has a couple of key responsibilities. One is to clearly criticize and point out the flaws in the document presented by the government. Yesterday, we saw our own critic for finance do a superb job of analysing the lack of credibility and the lack of forthrightness in the minister's statement that there are new taxes, there is going to be a continuing deficit, perhaps a worse one, and that the premises of the entire budget are suspect.

As the days proceed, we will find other members continuing the very important task of holding the budget up to light and letting Canadians take a hard look at just how weak the document really is.

This afternoon, I want to present what I think is another responsibility of opposition, and that is to present Canadians with a choice, to present them with alternatives, to have them look at a different kind of economic blueprint, a different kind of economic statement that could have been made, that should have been made, and might have been made with a different government, a government that would have a different set of values, a different outlook, different premises, different assumptions about what is happening in the country, what the priorities are, and what is important.

As much as a critique is important, so is choice. Canadians must be given the opportunity to understand that there are different ways of managing the economy of this country, and certainly of presenting a blueprint and design for Canada that will stand us well in the future.

Every member of Parliament, as we turn this particular decade, was visited with all kinds of material about the 1990s and the vistas beyond. We should all be aware that what is going on in the country does require some direction and some sense of purpose. In our case, a