

Government Orders

In Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Ontario and the Yukon Territory, we have governments which have made hard choices, which have said: "We cannot do everything, but what we will do will not be to the benefit of the rich, to the benefit of powerful corporations, but instead to the benefit of people who really need a tax break, to working people, to people with middle incomes who have been hammered so hard by this government and by the government before".

• (1110)

Just today figures have been released which indicate what has happened to the tax burden of people in 17 metropolitan areas across Canada which cover about 80 per cent of the population of Canada. If we go back to 1986, they paid just over 19 per cent of their incomes in taxes. Now they pay over 22 per cent of their incomes in taxes. That burden is not fair, it is not just, it has got to be dealt with. It is not being dealt with through this bogus piece of legislation. This bogus piece of legislation does not make the connection between expenditure control and reductions in the deficit. There is no connection between controlling expenditure and controlling a deficit.

Why? Because this government has rejected the unanimous report of the Standing Committee on Finance of this House. The only reason that we have to understand that rejection is that this government does not really want to deal with the extravagance and waste which it has created over the past seven and a half years of governing this country.

This bill has got to be beaten. This bill has got to be defeated. I hope Conservatives who are serious on the backbenches about deficit reduction in this country will stand up and defeat this legislation because it is a sham, a mockery that does not do what it sets out purportedly to do.

I urge this House to defeat this legislation because it is a cruel trick on Canadians across this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): I think it is really too bad that the hon. member for the New Democratic Party should be so anxious to sing the praises of the NDP government in Ontario and brag about its

achievements because so far the results have not been outstanding. I think his comments are particularly unfortunate because they reflect his usual criticism of government legislation. He criticizes every single fiscal measure this government tables and has done so for seven and a half years.

The hon. member and his party have no positive contribution to make to this debate. They are always ready to criticize, but we have yet to hear any suggestion for dealing with the real problems facing this country.

When considering this bill, an act respecting the control of government expenditures, a bill that is absolutely relevant to the current situation in this country, we should remember that this measure was announced in the 1991 budget. There was thunderous applause in the riding of Trois-Rivières and there was a wholly positive response when we announced mandatory legislated spending limits for the next five years. My constituents were delighted and told me: You are doing an excellent job of running the country's finances. We have an enormous debt we inherited from the Liberal government, and you are steering the right course to ensure we get rid of this debt.

This morning I heard my NDP colleague criticize the bill. I think we should look at the facts. Between 1970 and 1984, program spending increased by an average of 13.8 per cent annually. In other words, we had an annual increase of 13.8 per cent in program spending. From 1985 to 1992, the average annual increase was 3.7 per cent. This means that since 1984, this government has acted responsibly and run this country the way it ought to be run, with an annual reduction in program spending of 10 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you and I would have preferred to give more to Canadians. However, we have a job to do. We have responsibilities, which include managing the finances of this country and stopping the endless handouts that were typical of the Liberal government, which had programs to paint fences, shovel snow and wash windows. There were programs for just about anything. They did not create permanent jobs. All they did was spend, spend, spend.

In 1984, their legacy to us was a tremendous deficit of \$39 billion and a national debt of \$200 billion. That was their legacy, in 1984. That is what we got. I see this woke