

The Budget

children and how we do not want to burden them with debt in the future. I think we all agree with that.

I also want to raise other deficits that our children are facing. How many children in this country are facing a deficit of poor housing, children living in substandard conditions in our inner cities? How many of our Indian children are still on the reserves sniffing glue in northern Manitoba? How many children in this country are facing the prospect of their fathers and mothers being unemployed and not being able to collect unemployment insurance any longer? Perhaps the only job prospect is facing a move to Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver to get a job where they do not have a prospect of growing up in their own regions.

The question of deficit is not just one that you account in fiscal terms. You account it in terms of the enormous gaps and vacuums and the real serious mortgaging of our future in terms of our environment, in terms of our conditions of our cities, in terms of the social conditions that our children face.

When we talk about a million children in poverty, those are a million individual cases of tragedy. More than that, those are the children who should be tomorrow's engineers, scientists, doctors, politicians and journalists who will never be there, who will never even get to the starting gate because we are cutting back on their education, health care and housing.

• (1530)

This country is going to be desperately in need of highly skilled and highly trained young people in the future. However if at the very beginning because of a lack of proper day care, support, treatment and abuse centres, all of which have been attacked in this budget, children are not even given that chance, this country will face the worst deficit of all, and that is a deficit of human talent, human creativity and human ambition. That is the real deficit we face which this budget has in no way addressed. The budget is a great failure in that it does not come to grips with the underlying reality of this country.

This year the United Nations ratified the declaration of the rights of children. We were party to that declaration. It says: "The states party to the present convention recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, moral, mental and social environments".

We are flunking that test. This budget flunks the test. We want to offer Canadians an alternative way, a better choice, another way of deciding how we will give direction to this country in searching out answers and solutions to its economic and social problems.

That is the real task for Canadians. It is a task that this budget does not address. When we in the Liberal Party are given a chance we feel adequate and ready to do the job.

Mrs. Finestone: Madam Speaker, I am really pleased to hear my colleague address one of the fundamental values and visions for Canada that seems to be absent from the view of this Conservative government.

There were many holes and gaps in this long winded, poorly conceived and badly designed budget. I would ask my hon. colleague who was addressing the question of children and their future how he felt the children and the future that we leave as a legacy when not one word in this budget addressed the environment in which we live and the potential for leaving a much diminished social, physical, as well as mental environment for our families and our grandchildren.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Mount Royal for the question. As I said in my opening address, there were other ways of attacking the problems of this country.

What an opportunity we had. The Brundtland commission is now three years old. We had a summit in the city of Toronto just two years ago where all the industrial countries agreed that they would make major efforts to bring down the standard of emissions of fossil fuels and carbon dioxide in the air. We know that if we do not do something substantial and radical in this country and in countries around the world in 10 years or 20 years the earth will be a cesspool. That will be one of the legacies we leave to our children.

One way of doing something, which was discussed in the Brundtland commission and since then, is a green tax. The Minister of Finance says he wants revenue. Then why are we not taxing polluters? Why are we not saying to those companies which are engaging in practices that are environmentally unfriendly that they will no longer get the business grants, subsidies, write-offs and deductions which they are now all afforded? There is an awful lot of money to be saved for the Government of Canada. At the same time a good market pressure could