

*Supply*

people recognize it is easy to cut. But at the end of each cut is a victim, someone who is going to suffer as a result of the decision.

Surely the government must be doing things right. The official opposition suggests that we should not cut, we should be spending more. The third party suggests that we should have cut even more dramatically, recognizing fully that a lot of people have suffered as a result of budgetary decisions.

• (1655)

Canadians understand you must go at this kind of exercise gradually. They want this kind of government. They do not want their co-citizens to suffer unduly.

If anyone is going to be fair minded about the budget and the ensuing activity, he or she will need to acknowledge that the government has taken an important first step at addressing the question of the deficit and the debt, at creating long term, well remunerated employment for Canadians and at addressing the whole issue of social programs that Canadians want for those who need them.

[Translation]

As I indicated, the government has taken a very important first step.

[English]

**Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, we listened to the hon. member articulate in his presentation numerous statistics, figures, rationale, justification for the Liberal Party's budget, a budget that fails miserably in meeting what this country needs.

The average Canadian trying to support a family is interested in only one thing. When on earth will there be some tax relief? The Liberals presented a budget that is to add another \$100 billion to the debt. It is to add another \$10 billion in interest paid on the debt. At the end of three years, according to their figures which are not exactly believable they will still end up with a \$25 billion deficit.

I would like the hon. member to tell me how he explains to a pulp mill worker in Prince George, B.C. who is paying in excess of 60 per cent of his gross income in taxes of all forms, how a budget like this, a budget that is to increase the debt, that is to increase the interest on the debt that must be paid out of taxes, can expect in the near future to have more disposable income in his pocket so that he can provide for his family.

Also, I would like the hon. member to explain to me and to the corporations and private business in Canada how the Liberal government appreciates the role they play when in the budget it increases corporate taxes. They are the ones who create real, long lasting, good paying jobs. How is he to explain to them that

the Liberal government is on their side and that their government wants them to provide more jobs, expand and invest in the country when there is no certainty whatsoever in the taxation levels that corporate Canada is to pay?

At the same time that the hon. member is rationalizing all the plans of the Liberal budget, how will he explain to Canadians the 1.5 cent a litre gasoline tax that affects everyone in the country whether they are private citizens or corporations that rely on the transfer of freight or vehicles running, flying in the air, taking trains? How will he explain that the government had to raise gasoline and fuel taxes by 1.5 cents a litre?

The average citizen is interested in only one thing. When will my taxes be brought down? When will overspending in the annual budget stop? The figures that the member just quoted might be for our benefit because we have access to all the details in the budget but the average Canadian citizen is not blessed with having all the details.

They are asking only the one question. I would like the hon. member to tell me how he is going to answer the average Canadian taxpaying citizen.

• (1700)

**Mr. Duhamel:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of questions and I will attempt to answer them all.

It is true taxes are quite high. It is also true that in the foreseeable future as a result of a debt that was more than doubled by the previous government, a debt we will have to continue.

Let us look at figures. When the previous government came into power the debt was roughly \$179 billion. That is the figure from the auditor general. When this government came into power it was almost three times as much. Let us put it in perspective.

That is one of the reasons the Reform Party will never get anywhere. It does not understand the big picture. It exaggerates. I am surprised that my colleague did not mention we are now spending \$7 billion less than in the 1994-95 estimates. I am surprised my colleague did not mention that as a result of the program review, a rational review to make sure government was doing what it ought to be doing, we have saved \$3.4 billion.

How I wish I had more time. I have a series of quotes, because I had anticipated the question from one of my Reform colleagues, applauding the Liberal budget, recognizing nothing is perfect. I have other quotes and I tried to find one positive one about the Reform budget in which the figures did not add up. I could not find one positive quote.

I find it very difficult to have a member of the Reform Party telling us we do not have it right when the majority of Canadians