

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this nation has been facing this problem of contraband for the past four years. The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell was asking questions here in the House when the Leader of the Opposition was with the government and nothing was being done. When I asked for a report on that, it said that there was some hesitation. I said there should be no hesitation. I said to the RCMP: “You do your job everywhere in Canada”, and that is exactly what they are doing today.

• (1420)

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker I would like to ask the Prime Minister to tell us whether or not he confirms the allegation expressed yesterday by Chief Jerry Peltier according to which the government is on the brink of launching a massive major operation in Kanesatake.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): The answer, Mr. Speaker, is no.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, with his retirement only a few days away, the commanding officer of the RCMP in Quebec had the following comments to make and I quote: “We did not want to create social chaos over a few cartons of cigarettes, but the negotiations never amounted to anything and smuggling increased without anyone taking action.”

My question to the Prime Minister is as follows: How can he reconcile the comments of the commanding officer of the RCMP in Quebec with his own statements, when he asked us to name names, ostensibly because the RCMP did not have enough evidence to intervene?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have nothing further to add. We delivered a very clear statement in the House last Tuesday. The police are doing their job and cigarette smuggling networks in Canada are in the process of disappearing.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, for over a month now, the Prime Minister has been telling this House that the RCMP can enforce the law anywhere in Canada, that there are no “no go” zones and that the law applies equally to everyone.

What is the Prime Minister’s reaction to comments by the commanding officer of the RCMP in Quebec to the effect that politicians, out of fear, never succeeded in negotiating with the natives on this issue and as a result, cigarette smuggling spread throughout the reserves?

[English]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should realize that for the last three months the country has had a new government. He is talking about when his colleague was a member of the previous administration.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The government said previously said that its target for deficit reduction is to get the deficit to 3 per cent of GDP or down to about \$23 billion for 1996–97.

Is this still the government’s deficit target, the target that Canadians should have in mind when they read the deficit figures in the budget next week?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is what was written in the red book, so that will be the target.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister.

The government has implied that it wants to broaden the tax base to achieve greater equity but not to increase the total tax burden on Canadians. Is this still the primary objective of the government’s tax policy, the objective that Canadians should have in mind when they analyse the tax changes in the budget next week?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering what kind of question the hon. member will have next week.

We will have the budget next Tuesday and he will have all these answers.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, my question was whether or not that was still the objective. My second supplementary question is for the Prime Minister.

The government has stated time and time again that job creation is its highest priority and that its economic policies should be judged first and foremost on their impact on jobs.

Is this still the government’s highest priority, the one that Canadians should have in mind when they analyse the job impact of the budget next week?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we started before the budget when we put in place the infrastructure program that was to create jobs. There are other programs of the same nature in the red book.

If the hon. member wants to know what our objectives are, he should read the red book again.