

*Government Orders*

directly ahead. We are choking the life out of them by continuing to run huge budget deficits.

After all the Liberal fanfare, the deficit is still huge. It will still be \$25 billion two years from now. By then we could well be in the middle of a recession. The American economy is already showing signs of a slowdown. If that continues, or if it happens, our economy will be in a meltdown.

The Minister of Finance criticizes Reformers for suggesting that we adjust social programs now while there is time. In the next breath the government admits it is conducting its own study into the pension situation. By the time it screws up its own courage to act, the cuts it will make to old age pensions will truly be devastating. They will leave seniors in real poverty.

• (1640)

The Liberals can see the numbers as well as anyone. They know what needs to be done to protect our social programs in the future, but they are going to put off action because they do not have the guts to make the tough decisions today. In fact they will heap abuse on Reform suggestions, even if these suggestions are in the public interest, even if they are quietly undertaking to do exactly the same things themselves in an underhanded way.

Last week I tabled a petition with 20,000 names, calling for no new taxes. In a few days I will table 13,000 more names. I personally delivered 2,000 letters from my constituents to the office of the Minister of Finance calling upon him to balance the budget without raising taxes. These people did not get their wish. Canadians wanted a timetable for a balanced budget but the government failed to deliver.

There are simple tests of good government: conscientious control of the public purse; a strong clear vision of and commitment to the public interest that reaches far into the future; attention to regional fairness; and equitable reductions in government spending. I am disappointed that the government has failed these tests.

This budget has failed the Canadian people. No matter how well it is accepted by the markets in the short term, the numbers predict our future in the long term. The government had a chance to mend our social safety net on Monday, but through Bill C-73 it will allow interest payments to tear it to shreds over the coming years.

Shame on the government that it has squirrelled away the past year and a half making budget balancing all that much more tougher than it needed to be. It is a shame it is planning to saddle our nation with another \$90 billion in new debt, a debt which will be a pox on our social programs, a curse on our taxation levels, a drag on our job creating businesses and a millstone around the necks of our children and grandchildren, forever and ever, amen.

**Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last night I had the opportunity to review the base closures on television. The Chilliwack base is being closed which I understand is part of the member's riding.

There is not a member of Parliament on this side of the House who did not feel the pain that was expressed on that show last night. That is why many of us on this side of the House for the last few months have been trying to communicate to the opposition, to the Reform Party that we should not just be talking about the federal deficit. We should be talking about the human deficit.

What bothers me is that the debate has not expanded beyond the deficit in traditional terms. We have to figure out what we are going to do in the long term. Not only our country but other countries around the world have been faced with fluctuating interest rates. Capital is being pushed around by people who are shorting their own currencies and playing with derivatives and everything else. We as one nation in the G-7 are almost victims of this international game which is being played.

I wish that with the Reform Party members we could expand this debate. Let us not just think about the budget and the tough decisions we have had to make on this side. Make no mistake, we feel the cuts on this side as much as they do. I would venture to say many of us feel them even more. As Liberals it goes against the very grain and soul that brought us to this place, whereas the Reformers seem to be much more conditioned to deep cuts regardless of the human side of it.

• (1645)

Would the member be willing when we return after question period, along with his other colleagues, to maybe enter into a debate on a new and improved Bretton Woods agreement? We should start looking at what we can do to change interest rates, not just for Canada but for all the world. At the rate we are going it is not just Canada that is in trouble. It is the whole world.

**Mr. Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his presentation. I understand his first point about the base closures. I realize that base closures have affected many ridings and cross party lines. Some of the Bloc members have had ridings affected. I know many of the Liberals have had closures in their ridings as well.

With the closure of CFB Chilliwack there will no longer be an army base in all of British Columbia. There are 12 bases in Canada. There is not even one in B.C. To me that is a concern. Emergency preparedness is a concern. Even more so, it is a concern that there be a national armed forces presence.

I am concerned that people from B.C. get an opportunity to be trained in Quebec, as I am that Quebecers get an opportunity to be trained in B.C. It is just a matter of equity. I realize I am not singled out in one sense, and yet on the other hand it is a mistake in the long term not to have a land forces presence anywhere in British Columbia. It is short sighted. I realize I share that hurt