

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Madam Speaker, first of all, I am delighted with this opportunity to speak to the amendment moved by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Since we first came to the House of Commons on October 25, 1993, you have come to recognize the spirited style of the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. Although style is not necessarily a guarantee of competence, I think the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot passes the test. He is both spirited and competent, and I want to commend him on the way he defends the interests of our party and the interests of Quebec.

• (1235)

This motion, and I will read it quickly, says that the hon. member moved, seconded by the hon. member for Châteauguay,

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following therefor:

"Bill C-76, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 27, 1995, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence."

I must say that I do not claim to be as competent as the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot in this particular area, so I asked him to explain the purpose of this amendment. For the benefit of our listeners, not necessarily in this House but outside the House, I would say that the purpose of this amendment is to let the Minister of Finance go back to the drawing board, to ask him to go back and do his homework.

I have a 16-year old son in high school, and when he shows my wife and me some work that is not up to par, we tell him to go back and do his homework. That is the purpose of the amendment: to ask the Minister of Finance to go back and do his homework.

Why? Because there are a number of questions worth asking Canadians and Quebecers who are listening. Is this budget realistic when it fails to mention \$6.6 billion in unpaid taxes which are not recovered? Is this budget realistic when it is so reluctant to tax Canada's big corporations? According to the statistics, between 62,000 and 70,000 companies in Canada make a profit and do not pay a cent in taxes. Is that normal? Should a democratic society like ours accept this double standard, when the middle class and the poor are getting poorer and the rich and the big corporations get richer at their expense?

Is this normal? Is this acceptable from a social point of view? I am convinced that all these people who are having lunch in their kitchens, every time they get the mail and see their bills piling up and interest rates go up, all these people wonder whether they will be able to afford a new car two or three years from now. Will this young couple be able to afford a house two

or three years from now, a roof over their heads? Will they be doomed to live in poverty? Will our prospects seem better two or three years from now, or are we going to go back into a recession? These are considerations that this legislation totally ignores.

Something else. Are these tax loopholes normal? Is it normal to see millionaires who do not pay taxes and, in some cases, draw unemployment insurance benefits? That takes some doing. In any case, on the Île d'Orléans and the Beaupré flats, people say: "C'est le bout", which means adding insult to injury.

Family trusts. When he brought down his budget on February 27, the Minister of Finance announced that the family trust system would be abolished. He forgot to point out it would be abolished in 1999.

This means, if I am a very rich family that has a family trust, I have until 1999 to adjust to the new rules and to find other tax loopholes, other investment vehicles so that I can continue to shelter these amounts. So the question is whether all this, whether this budget is normal, acceptable and realistic in the Canada and Quebec of 1995.

• (1240)

When I go back to my riding on Fridays and on the weekends, people often stop me at the corner store or at the shopping centre to tell me that it did not hurt as much as they expected. This may be true, but we have to look beyond the words to see how vicious the budget was. I tell these people to wait for the Quebec government to bring down its own budget to see how the federal budget will affect them.

And if I was talking to the people of Ontario, I would tell them to wait and see what kind of problems the Ontario government will have. The budget includes a decentralizing measure whose only aim is to offload part of the deficit onto the provinces and make them pay for something else. We will see how much Ontario and Quebec have been affected, when they bring down their budgets. The finance ministers of the two provinces have already mentioned this, in any case.

It is almost a truism to say that the real budget promised this year will be carried over to next year, once again. Why is the federal government waiting until next year, we might ask? Is it expecting the Quebec referendum to be held in May or June and therefore putting off the offensive cuts in health care, education and social assistance until afterward? I ask you. Is this not the case?

The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, however, promised the introduction of flexible federalism. Is this flexible federalism? Now we have a real idea of the cost of the status quo and of a no vote in the upcoming referendum.