

*The Budget*

However, I will not elaborate on this, because I do not have enough time.

This budget is a skilful political juggling act but in fact, there is nothing in it which really addresses the real social problems by creating jobs.

• (1120)

[English]

**Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about the cuts in transfers to provinces under the Liberal budget. He talked about them as being downloading, which they are.

In the Reform taxpayers' budget, the alternative budget Reform presented, we also had reductions in transfers to provinces. We transferred the tax points along with the reductions. We transferred the ability of the provinces to raise the revenue to compensate for this reduction in transfers to provinces.

Let us use the analogy of a chicken and an egg. The government now transfers eggs to provinces so they can pay for some of their programs, done through transfer payments. Instead of transferring individual eggs to the provinces, the Liberals transferred a carton of eggs except they removed two. Therefore they transferred 10 eggs instead of the dozen. They cut the transfers.

There are also strings attached because of the regulations under the Canada Health Act. Instead of transferring the carton with fewer eggs Reform transferred the whole chicken. That is the program. We transferred the revenue producing ability to the provinces. Instead of transferring individual eggs and keeping the chicken as the Liberals have done in their program, Reform transferred the whole chicken so that revenue is in the hands of the provinces. They can fund these programs.

This would be popular in Quebec. Quebecers want more control of their future. Quebec generally is in favour of decentralization to the provinces.

I would like the hon. member to respond to what the Liberals have done in cutting transfers and not cutting the revenue producing ability as compared to what Reform proposed in the taxpayers' budget of cutting transfers to provinces but giving provinces the power to collect that revenue instead of the federal government and therefore giving provinces much more control over their own programs and their own resources.

[Translation]

**Mr. St-Laurent:** You know, Mr. Speaker, each minute the House sits is very important and certainly costs taxpayers a lot of money. I have great respect for the Reform Party's hypothetical budget, but if we start hypothesizing about hypothetical budgets in the House of Commons, we better change its name to House of Utopia.

I think our taxpayers deserve more respect than that. I have respect for the Reform Party and its budget, but unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately; Canada will decide after the referendum—this party is not in power. Let us look at more factual matters, matters before us today and that we have to deal with. Much as I respect Reform Party members, the fact remains that their Party's budget is nothing more than a piece of paper for the time being.

[English]

**Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of my most rewarding duties as a member of Parliament is to visit schools in my riding and meet with students.

Three weeks ago I participated in such a visit. As usual I found the questions asked by the students quite interesting, the Quebec referendum, unemployment insurance and the environment.

I was struck by a very distressing thought. Each of these students has a huge debt hanging over their head. Because of the size of our national debt, those young students are starting out life with a \$19,000 mortgage. Unlike past generations that could build their hopes and dreams on the solid granite of public finances, these young people are building their dreams on quicksand.

• (1125)

I cannot accept that. I entered politics to give a voice to young Canadians too often forgotten by past governments. It is fundamentally unfair to expect young Canadians to pay a debt incurred by past generations. It is particularly irresponsible for Canadians who have lived beyond their means for so many years.

That is why I am so proud to be a member of this government. This is a moment of great importance in our history. For the first time in many years Canada has a government and a finance minister ready to do what must be done in order to control the deficit.

The minister's budget speech was nothing less than a call to arms to all Canadians. We must band together to defeat the deficit and the debt. Steadily, silently these two economic forces are robbing our government of the strength and sapping it of the vitality it needs to foster growth, care for the needy and invest in the future.

For too long governments have postponed tough decisions. For too long governments have been pretending everything was fine while borrowing another \$30 billion and \$40 billion from our children. Now we have finally turned the corner.

A nation that has been sleep walking toward the precipice of bankruptcy has awakened with one foot on the edge of the cliff. Our government has the will to do what is necessary. As important, it has the support of the Canadian people.