

Supply

[*Translation*]

We have a very beautiful country with great resources and immense human potential.

• (1210)

Since the Conservative government came into power, everything has gone downhill. The resources are there but the human potential is disappearing for lack of encouragement and work. To what has the party in power led us? To cynicism and despair. Canadians wonder more and more if their troubles will ever end.

For decades the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has come out publicly to denounce an intolerable social situation. It happened again this year. The bishops blame the economic policies of the last decade. Unemployment is costly in every way, and unfortunately many people have passed the point of no return. The loss of human potential since the Conservatives took office cannot help but tarnish Canada's image, and this must change.

The finance minister's farewell budget is like his government; a government which certainly does not want to face its responsibilities; a government which certainly does not want to cut its own benefits but does not hesitate to cut the benefits of those who are in a bad spot; a government which Canadians will remember at the next election; a government which has had its last mandate for decades to come.

Canadians want a government of action and we in the Liberal Party are prepared to take over and get the country back on its feet.

[*English*]

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague from the Liberal Party mentioned that we need a managed budget in order to survive.

One thing the Minister of Finance did relatively well was control the spending cuts with regard to the economy of Canada. Over the last few years all the countries in the western industrialized world have been restructuring. Hindsight has 20/20 vision but if during the late 1970s and early 1980s Canada had restructured to meet competition at that point we would not have the problem we have today.

We certainly rested on our laurels, on that low Canadian dollar. Then up went the wages and we flatly could not compete, specifically with our biggest partner, the United States. Our wages increased by about 35 per cent to 40 per cent, but in reading the *Financial Post* this morning we are certainly getting that under way. This restructuring is going to prove very beneficial for the country.

I have a couple of points and a couple of questions for my colleague. She mentioned pensions of members of Parliament and asked why this government had not acted. I would just like to remind her that on February 8 the President of the Treasury Board announced a public inquiry through an actuarial firm to review the total compensation package. Thanks to my private member's bill on which I spent two years, the minister is saying that the total compensation package must be reviewed. I know she will want to participate in that as well.

As for restructuring and programs that no longer serve a need, I agree with the member. We could look at all levels of governments but let us just take our own House here. Perhaps we do not need as many departments and we do not need 38, 39 or 40 cabinet ministers. I totally agree. With regard to restructuring of the Public Service, we do need a strong Public Service to service Canadians across the country. Many Public Service positions have been cut and this particular budget will cut another 16,500 positions in the next five years.

I want to hear more about this because all of us realize that we must restructure government. Perhaps the member could inform me about some of the areas she feels could be merged or shut down.

• (1215)

Mrs. Maheu: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Calgary Southwest for her comment. I agree, 39 cabinet ministers and 39 parliamentary secretaries, 39 chauffeurs and 39 limousines—

Mrs. Sparrow: Parliamentary secretaries?

Mrs. Maheu: All right. Parliamentary secretaries do not have chauffeurs. They have taxi cabs.

I cannot knock everything that is going on. When we say that restructuring will get us out of this mess, then where do we find the jobs? Where are the jobs going to be created with this type of restrictive budget?