

The Address

innovations that raised our standard of living. It was not social programs that gave us wealth but the opportunity to work hard and keep what we had made. That was the driving force that built this country.

The hard choice has a great future. If we balance the budget lower taxation will come. Jobs will be created. Horizons will be opened up. We will have the money to educate our children, look after our old, the sick and the poor and still be able to compete with any nation in the world. Jobs come from trade not from infrastructure programs.

To sum up, we must turn this country around and start anew. I look for leadership and vision from my honourable colleagues across the floor. Hard choices must be made. History has always glorified leaders who have reached beyond themselves and led their nation through the dark tunnel to the light, which in our case is renewed prosperity without debt.

• (1110)

I issue this challenge: will this government commit itself now to balancing the budget by the end of this Parliament? The first step down the hard road is to approve the subamendment by the member for Calgary Southwest to cap federal spending at \$153 billion. I urge all members of this House to vote in favour of the subamendment.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my hon. friend on his maiden speech in the House. One of the main points he raised referred to the fact that we have to get our deficit under control.

One of the causes of our deficit problem is the amount of money the federal government fails to collect. It is an issue that more of us should get very serious about when we consider that a major preoccupation of many Canadians has now become purchasing contraband cigarettes and illegal liquor.

We found from the Auditor General's report yesterday that tens of thousands of businesses appear to be collecting the GST and not remitting it to the federal government. This obviously indicates a clear loss of faith in our tax system, to say nothing of the underground economy that probably includes almost everybody in one form or another through cash transactions or a barter system designed to avoid paying tax.

Does my friend share the view that one of the major steps to be taken in terms of reducing the deficit would be to close off some of the more obviously unfair tax exemptions that exist in our tax system to begin restoring faith in the system so that people will again be prepared to participate in the revenue collection of the country, knowing that our system is fair and more just?

Mr. Williams: Madam Speaker, in response to the question of the hon. member for Kamloops, I mentioned in my speech that we have a feeble economy. Taxes are too high. This is why we find today that businesses are struggling to pay the taxes to keep the government afloat. Even then the government still needs another \$40 billion or more to pay its bills.

If we are going to look for a vibrant and strong economy we must look forward to the day when investment overtakes spending by the government. We must also look forward to the day when taxes start to come down and affordability of taxes comes within the realm of everybody to pay their fair share.

We always agree with the need for equality but I think the focus of the government has to be toward a balanced budget. It can collect the taxes due in order to do so but we must look forward to the day when we see taxes coming down and a greater willingness by Canadian people to participate in paying for the government of this country.

[Translation]

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member's words. I was surprised to hear his stand on social programs, because I understood him to say that social programs destroyed the initiative of Canadians and should therefore be eliminated.

This particular position is disappointing to me because what I heard from the voters of Jonquière during the election campaign was that Canada and Quebec have always been concerned about the weakest and the most disadvantaged. My constituents said clearly to me that they do not believe people who get rich by profiting from private enterprise will be generous enough to take care of the disadvantaged, the sick and the poor.

• (1115)

I have a question for the hon. member and I hope he will have the time to respond. I will be brief. Does he know of many cases where people who became wealthy through their work or their business were successful in setting up programs or providing health care and social services, or services to the unemployed and the disadvantaged on a scale equal to what we now have in Canada?

[English]

Mr. Williams: Madam Speaker, in response to the hon. member's question, I think we have to recognize that this country was born and developed out of initiative. We very much recognize our social obligations to Canadians who are old, those who are sick and those in unfortunate circumstances who are unable to look after themselves. Recognizing its responsibilities in these areas shows the maturity of any society. I would be the last to suggest that we shun that responsibility.