

Government Orders

This is basically what this budget does, although it tries to hide it. Here is another point that I was just about to forget. This budget talks about tax points, equalization and cash transfers. What is being cut by the budget are the cash transfers to the provinces. This is the part which is changed and remixed.

The government adds up cash transfer payments, equalization and also tax points, on which it has no control whatsoever, and says: "Look how little we are cutting".

This is a terrible cover up by people who, during the election campaign, were going around with their red book in hand saying that their objective was a more open, a more transparent government, so transparent in fact you could almost see through the front cover of the red book. They were going around everywhere saying: "We are going to have something very understandable, very clear so that people know what the government is doing".

• (1755)

This budget manipulates, messes around with and monkeys with figures to make people believe that they will hardly be affected. This is what we have to expect from a Liberal government which has become more conservative than the Tories and has grown more and more like the Reform Party. This is the kind of Canada this government is shaping. For our part, we are going to have to explain all this to people who will have a choice to make.

We will have the opportunity to conduct the same debate in a few months since the government will only implement its new vision next year, being afraid of doing it before the referendum. We will be there to remind Quebecers, before they make a choice, that they have to find out who these people who govern us are, where they are leading us and what will the consequences be.

[English]

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is interesting to hear the debate on the budget and whether or not it should be delayed. I believe that although the budget is not really what I would have liked to have seen, the government had better get on with it and start instituting some cost cutting measures. If the government were to be prudent, it would come up with another budget in the fall to continue the process and start working toward a balanced budget.

I come from a province that is often criticized for living in a different world. It is the province of British Columbia. It is quite true, we do live in a part of the country that is quite different from the rest of Canada. The Rocky Mountains separate us from the rest of Canada. Because of our separation from the rest of

Canada, our trade has been north-south. Our communication has been with our neighbours to the south.

My riding is on the Canadian-American border. We are not afraid of Americans. We are not afraid of trading with them or of being friends with them. We have established in our province a relationship with the states of Washington, Oregon and California that has developed its own economy. It is very distressful for me to see, because of the strength of the flow of goods and commerce north and south, that some Canadian businesses in my riding and in neighbouring ridings have chosen to move their businesses south of the border. They have not only chosen to move their businesses south of the border, but they have taken jobs south of the border. The reason they gave me is it is because of the cost of doing business in Canada. A lot of the cost of doing business in Canada is made up of high taxes and regulations that governments impose on the business community. It troubles me that these businesses are taking their money and their jobs and moving south.

It gives me some encouragement when I hear of groups such as Cascadia, which is an economic union between some of the northwestern United States and some of the western provinces of this country. I believe it is a union that includes Alaska, Washington, Oregon and northern California, with Alberta and British Columbia. It is an economic union that has some powerful economists and business people who are looking at the potential of a more secure economic union between western provinces and the western United States. That gives me some faith that there are other ways of addressing some of the problems that are created by the government.

I would hate to think that this economic union, which seems to be blossoming, might ever become a political union. It is important that I represent my constituency and my country in saying that this government has a mandate from the people of this country to try to reduce the cost of government so that businesses, not only in my constituency but in all constituencies across the country, will stay in Canada, will keep the jobs in Canada and will keep the money in Canada.

It is my concern that this government take seriously the task it has at hand, to make sure it is up front with Canadians as to what reducing government spending will cost. The government must be honest, it must be forthright, and it must look to the future of this country, not just to what is happening today.

• (1800)

It is very important for the government to get on with the business at hand, not to delay implementing the budget, but to get on with implementing it today. It is just as important for the government to look at coming back with another budget, a mini-budget if you will, that will carry it forward until the next budget year.