

Mr. Cullen: I do not think the opposition would know the truth if it hit them in the face judging from what I have been listening to today.

Now, in keeping with the request of Mr. McDermott and the Canadian Labour Congress I, along with a lot of other Members of Parliament, agreed to meet with members of various labour unions from across Canada to hear about their particular concerns on the budget and the present state of the economy. One individual came to me and said he has been working all this time trying to get a home, trying to get it together, and now the government is taking it away from him. So I said, "well, what is your situation?" He bought a home for \$39,000, with a \$38,000 mortgage and paid \$1,000 down. He did not like the floors in the house—remember that this is his first purchase—and so he went out to a credit union and borrowed more money so that he could put in the kind of floors he wanted.

At that time he was earning the minimum wage, as was his wife. In fact, his wife was pregnant. They had two children, the wife had not worked since giving birth to the baby, and because he was now working for the minimum wage he could not meet his mortgage and credit union commitments. Now if that is the kind of management that individual exercises, it is nice to have a scapegoat like the government to blame for your particular problems.

I was serious today, Mr. Speaker, when I said I listened very attentively because I also did that when I was in my riding, and I have also read very carefully letters not only from my constituents but from across Canada. Some of the points made were excellent but, Mr. Speaker, members of the Liberal Party did not wait for that first wave of complaint or criticism which follows every budget. We looked at it ourselves, studied it—

An hon. Member: And said what a disaster.

Mr. Cullen: —and determined that if we were going to support the budget, we were going to make representations to the Minister of Finance. We did so, and I am proud to say that he showed the flexibility for which he has become famous by agreeing to something like 17 amendments after previously having made three different changes.

The opposition cannot have it both ways. Some of them say it is a massive retreat, there is no budget left, it is decimated. Then others get up and say, oh, they were very minor technical changes. That is why I say you cannot depend on the opposition criticism because we cannot hear and understand from them what side of the coin they want. They cannot have it both ways. They tried that when they were in government. When I say government, they were in government for nine months but in this House for only something like three. Their arrogance is rather incredible since they could not handle the House for any more than three months, and yet they are now going to tell the country how a particular budget should be drafted.

They are afraid to listen. If they were prepared to listen at that time, which they were not, if they were prepared to count at that time, which they were not, they might conceivably still be in power, heaven forbid, and we would have had that worst

Supply

of all possible budgets foisted upon us, the one brought in by the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie). I think he is happy today that he does not have that particular responsibility and is not accountable to the Canadian public for that particular mistake.

Mr. Wilson: Ask your constituents which was better, Bud.

Mr. Cullen: Now, Mr. Speaker, it is my view that the criticism the Minister of Finance is receiving from this side of the House is more constructive and responsible. It is the sort of criticism which is appropriate for every budget, which is why some changes have been made and why some five or six items, if the minister can get the consent of the House, will be referred for further study, items such as insurance and corporate reorganization. I think that came about as a direct result of honest, solid representations, not only from Liberal members but from people who met with and wrote to the Minister of Finance who was prepared to listen.

Mr. Wilson: Who had to listen.

Mr. Cullen: Well, the hon. member says, "a poorly-thought-out budget in the first place." I think there are some items in the budget that could maybe have been looked at more carefully.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: Careful now, Bud.

Mr. Cullen: It was for this reason, Mr. Speaker, that a Liberal group on this side got together and indicated to the minister those areas where we thought changes should be made. The minister was very quick, and properly so, to respond to these responsible and constructive critical comments that were made. However, in listening to the opposition today, I was looking for something that might be helpful, something that we might use to buttress our arguments for further changes we might like to see. All we heard were misrepresentations: Sixty thousand women will no longer qualify for a particular credit. We hear all of these tales of gloom and doom but we do not hear one solid, constructive thought.

We have heard from the NDP about exchange controls, but when they are challenged, it is not really exchange controls they are in favour of; it is a modified form of controls, without identifying what they mean by "modified". That is the old NDP trick, because when you do bring in something of that nature, and there are modifications made, those are not the modifications they were talking about, they would not have done it that way if they had been in power. They always leave that convenient loophole.

I listened very carefully, Mr. Speaker, for something positive from the opposition today which might be used in this particular budget.

Mr. Nielsen: Withdraw it.