

The Budget—Mr. Garneau

tough at times but to give in whenever the pressure gets too hard.

As for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), he must follow a bad score and improvise in turn a budget policy, and a tax reform which he has delayed time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, each minister has a few pieces of the puzzle in hand, and takes care of his own business but there is no conductor to really give the tempo, to coordinate initiatives and indicate to the Canadian people the direction of Government action.

● (1220)

[English]

I would like to conclude by returning to the underlying economic approach of this Government and this Budget.

Everything is not okay, far from it. Canadians do not believe in the concept that "I'm all right Jack". They care about the hardships facing their neighbours and the regions of Canada.

We expect the Government to show much more leadership in attacking the growing gap between the rich and the poor and between the have and have not regions of the country. It is simply not good enough to leave Canada's future only in the hands of market forces.

This country had a national dream, a dream of equality of opportunity no matter where one lives. We Liberals will not let this dream die.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Garneau: Canadians expect nothing more, and they will accept nothing less.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to move:

That the motion of the Minister of Finance be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and by substituting the following:

—This House condemns the government for:

- presenting a budget that increases taxes on individual Canadians for the third year in a row, totalling billions and billions of dollars;
- widening the gap between the rich and the poor by their ill-advised and heartless fiscal policy;
- cutting the crucial Regional Economic Development Budget, for the third year in a row;
- once again delaying the long promised essential Tax Reform program thereby postponing any attempt to create more fairness to our tax system which is being eroded under the present conservative administration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We shall resume debate on the amendment with the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy). But first, the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis), on a point of order.

● (1230)

[English]

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been discussions among the Parties. I think you will find, as is the usual tradition, that there is unanimous agreement to permit the first speaker for the New Democratic Party to have, if necessary, the same time as the first speaker for the Official Opposition.

May I suggest that, since the hour is getting on, the Hon. Member's speech be heard and the question and answer period be held until perhaps after three o'clock.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) has just said is, in fact, a tradition of the House. Is there unanimous consent to that effect?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have had 20 years of experience in watching Budgets both as a journalist and as a politician in both this Chamber and in the Ontario Legislature. I venture to say that this is the emptiest and the most insignificant Budget that I have seen in all those 20 years of experience.

Since the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) decided to defer the tax reform to be fair to all Canadians, there was a challenge in the Budget that he be frank with Canadians in recognizing the situation that many Canadians face. There was a challenge that the Minister of Finance provide real leadership in managing the economy in ways which every Canadian would benefit from. Unfortunately, the Minister was not fair. He was not frank and he has failed to provide the leadership we need. This was a Budget of lost opportunities from a Minister of Finance who has demonstrated that he fails to understand how most Canadians perceive how the economy is progressing and how the actions and economic policies of the Government affect them.

The Minister was so busy patting himself on the back yesterday that I thought his arm was going to fall off on several occasions. There is something seriously wrong with his perceptions because the Minister and his Government speak of Canada having a strong economic performance, yet the recent Gallup poll, not this morning's but the one of a month ago, indicates that more than 60 per cent of Canadians think otherwise. They think that the Government's record in economic management is weak. Are 15 million Canadians wrong, Mr. Speaker? Or is the view that the Minister of Finance has acquired, either from the top floor of the Ministry of Finance or from the riding of Etobicoke, somehow different from what most Canadians are experiencing?

Let me quote the Minister. He said the following both in French and in English:

If I had to choose just one message for Canadians today, it would be this: Our economic renewal program is working. It is delivering more growth, more jobs and more opportunities now. It is building new confidence at home. By changing our image abroad, it is helping to attract the investment that Canada needs.