

Borrowing Authority

be insignificant changes, insignificant meaning in this case, however, that we get a variation of more than \$2 billion, compared with what the deficit would have been using the former accounting system. And this is a very conservative estimate, because the Bank of Montreal, no less, stated in a recent report that if we got rid of all this creative accounting, we would realize the national debt was nearly \$4 billion more than the \$29.3 billion quoted by the Minister of Finance. His performance clearly falls short of the objectives set by the Conservatives themselves. In the Budget brought down two years ago, the Minister of Finance expected the deficit to drop to \$25.9 billion for the fiscal year that is about to end. Surely this would have been reason enough to make the Minister less complacent in his last Budget Speech, when the Minister had nothing to say but a lot to hide.

● (1630)

Alain Dubuc in *La Presse* gave a very apt summary of the situation on February 11, and I quote:

—the Minister's accounting practices are equalled only by the ethics of some of his colleagues.

A little further, we read:

To keep the deficit at about the same level, the Minister had to increase taxes again and resort to some financial tricks. There is the tax on gas that brings in \$225 million, and there is also the fact that the tax reform will produce a revenue this year.

Even worse, in addition to failing to significantly reduce the deficit and in addition to putting a maximum tax burden on all Canadians, this Government has completely ignored young people, senior citizens, the homeless and the poor. It has also ignored regional disparity. It is so busy helping Canadians who are benefiting from the excellent state of our economy that it cannot be bothered to listen to the grievances of Canadians whom the economy is passing by.

As a Liberal concerned about the well-being of all citizens, I cannot agree with proposals designed to benefit the privileged and prosperous, while the poorest and neediest in this country must suffer.

The Government continues to brag about its job creation statistics. Although the situation is improving, which is not surprising after six years of economic growth, Canada still has more than one million unemployed, and the Government does not seem to notice. Job creation programs are being cut back regularly. They tell us the economy is in such good shape that people should be able to find jobs without government assistance. That may be true in some regions, but it certainly is not true in all parts of Canada, and it certainly is not true for young people, whose unemployment rate continues to be twice the national average.

In spite of a situation that is particularly painful for our youth, the last Budget of the Minister of Finance, where the only spectacular measure was a one cent increase in the tax on gas, had nothing more to offer young Canadians than an ordinary economic statement.

Last night, during the closing ceremonies at the Olympic Games in Calgary, the President of the International Olympic Committee said at the end of his speech that the future depended on our youth. I could not agree more with these words, which were heard by millions of Canadians. I can only hope that the Conservative Government and the Minister of State for Youth (Mr. Charest) were also listening. I take this opportunity to congratulate the many athletes who took part in these games, particularly the Canadian athletes who are all youths on which Canada can depend to maintain our traditions. When it comes to finance, these young people were way ahead of the Minister of Finance of the Conservative Government.

Although I have precious little hope that these words may have impressed the Minister responsible for youth, notwithstanding his many lofty promises, I dare say he must have felt somewhat uncomfortable for failing to give more than lip service to our young Canadians.

Not so very long ago in a press conference he went as far as talking about a global youth strategy. I would not know whether the Minister fully appreciates the latest Budget, but as far as I can see it did not have much to say about this question, however important it may be. I would suggest that the Government simply does not grasp the full significance of the problems young people have to cope with.

I agree with the Minister when he says there is no magic solution to youth problems, but that just cannot be a valid excuse to do nothing. Unfortunately very few problems in this country can be solved with a magic wand. But when we set our minds to it we realize that simple, constructive and intelligent measures can help improve considerably most existing problem situations, especially with respect to young people.

The Minister cannot even manage to maintain existing programs at a decent level, and I am referring specifically to Challenge '88. No wonder young Canadians have had it up to here. This announcement falls far short of what they can rightfully expect and does not give us a single clue as to what the Conservative Government is doing to help them. There has been no improvement over the previous edition of the program, except perhaps in the case of school drop-outs, and to top it off the appropriations are even lower than they were four years ago.

In 1984, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Government earmarked \$200 million for its Youth Employment Program. In 1988, all this Tory Government has to offer is a meager \$180 million and I will never agree with the Minister of State for Youth (Mr. Charest) when he says that this budgetary freeze is normal and acceptable in view of a lower level of unemployment among young people. Too many young people are without jobs for the Government to rest on its laurels. Drop-outs are not just young people who are fed up with school. Several among them just cannot afford to attend a college or university.