

Government Orders

tive. This budget is a rational way to bring the size and structure of government into line with our needs.

We agree with Canadians that a balanced budget is the goal and we will get there by setting realistic and achievable targets. This budget leads by example. We are cutting government first.

We believe this budget truly marks the beginning of a new era.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to budget speeches for at least 30 years. Except for a brief 8-year period of Conservative government, the Liberals were in office for most of those 30 years. I have yet to see a Minister of Finance table a budget in this House and say that it is not a good one. All were guided by the same concern for fairness and justice. Not one of those ministers said that what he was proposing was not good. What I do not understand is that, after 30 years of good budgets, the end result is bad.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lebel: I was never able to understand that equation: the sum total of the good is a negative figure. And right now that figure is almost \$600 billion. The Minister of Finance tells us that all those who were here before him were in the wrong and that what they suggested made no sense. He adds that his budget is a real one and a good one. Sure. However, one of the predecessors of the finance minister is the current Prime Minister, who also contributed to the growth of the deficit.

The minister just told us that there are people in the national capital region, in Ottawa-Hull, who are happy about the cuts made in the public service. The minister more or less acted the way he did with Saint-Jean. He eliminated 400 jobs and, at the very last minute, he managed to save 20 and claim that it was a miracle on his part. Let the minister bring those Hull and Aylmer residents and ask them in front of us whether they agree with the loss of 45,000 jobs in the public service. Let me give you an example. At the taxation data centre, in Saint-Hubert, there is a 6-month backlog to process the returns of businesses conducting R & D.

• (1050)

Currently, there are businesses on the verge of experiencing major financial problems because they are not receiving their due from the federal government. The public servants cannot process their claim. And the minister would want us to believe that the budget tabled on Monday is the greatest thing since sliced bread. I do not believe that and let me tell you something else. Next year, the minister will once again say: "The others before me, including myself, did not do well. However, I know what I am doing this time".

The minister should explain certain things. I remember one month when the unemployment rate dropped one tenth of one per cent. The Minister of Finance was elated. The economy was picking up and everybody was happy. The following month, economic activity rose by one per cent. Now, that was even better; things were really looking up. But I simply cannot understand these people. How did the minister manage to fool Outaouais residents and make them accept the elimination of 45,000 jobs, when in fact such a loss is a terrible thing. I would appreciate an answer from the minister.

Mr. Massé: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that opposition members have asked me these questions, because they will give me the opportunity to set the record straight. Over the years, Canadian budgets may have resulted in a large deficit but, at the same time, they have produced what the UN calls the best country in the world, with one of the highest rates of income per capita in the world, a country that enjoys considerable peace and harmony compared with other nations, a country where life is good and incomes are high. That is what successive Canadian budgets have given us.

During the quiet revolution that took place in Quebec in the sixties, we as Quebecers managed to change our structures, values and policies within the federation as it was back then. This gave us the country we now have and want to keep, because it served us well. Speaking of the last budget, 433,000 jobs were created in 1994, including 116,000 in Quebec. What are the factors involved in creating jobs in a country?

Most jobs are not created directly by governments, whether it is Ontario, Quebec or the federal government. However, government policies produce a climate allowing the private sector to create jobs. Clearly, the confidence generated and the policies adopted by the Liberal government last year allowed the economy to create over 400,000 jobs, including more than 100,000 in Quebec. That is what our government has accomplished.

I am so pleased that the hon. member has brought up the matter of Saint-Jean, a community where we had reached with the former Liberal government in Quebec an agreement that the local population found acceptable, which would have kept the college open and continued to create jobs, which was, in fact, a hope for the future. When the new government, of which our Bloc colleagues, under the direction of their leader, are a mere extension, arrived on the scene, it decided, for its own ideological reasons, that it wanted no part of any agreement. These ideological reasons were disclosed by a minister, who has kept a pretty low profile since then.

In one month, we met with local representatives who know that the region needs the college and whose goal is not to promote their ideology but to create jobs and generate economic activity in the region. We agreed with these people to keep the college open and maintain the core that will eventually become a