

The Budget—Mr. Caouette

• (5:00 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, on page 38 of his budget speech, the minister says in his distinctive evasive style:

The economy is in a state of approximate balance—

Approximate balance! There is but a small gap of \$740 million.

—during a period of readjustment, cooling off somewhat from the overheated condition of last year.

He goes on in that marvelous phraseology by saying:

The modest prospective deficit in the federal budget in terms of our national economic accounts will be a moderate sustaining force this year.

There you have all that is needed to stage the nicest parody of the century. Approximate balance, does that mean real imbalance? When one speaks of an approximate balance, it is because one is not sure. Then imbalance exists and that is what we are now experiencing. The Canadian people would certainly like to hear about it, but from the minister himself. A small deficit! On the traditional basis of public accounts, the deficit stood at \$428 million last year, and this year, having increased, it will reach \$740 million by next fall.

The least that can be said is that it is not a mini-deficit but rather a very sizeable one that weighs heavily on the shoulders of every Canadian taxpayer, not to mention the fact that the national debt carries interest.

In 1965-66, this interest was \$1,077 million. It rose to \$1,159 million in 1966-67, and to \$1,237 million—not \$234 million—in 1967-68. That is just the interest on the national debt.

All this, Mr. Speaker, leads me to the conclusion that we could have 25 years of budget speeches such as the one made by the present Minister of Finance without a solution to the problem being found.

Canadians want positive action. They want to live decently in a country which they are ready to build, and I am sure that hon. members and the ministers all want Canada to develop and grow.

Today, it is the financial system which impedes development and stumps growth because it always forces us to pay two or three times for what we get.

To build a school, we borrow. When the time comes to pay for it, two of them have been paid for, one for finance, one for us.

[Mr. Caouette.]

Whenever a road is built, one is paid to finance, and one is for us. The same thing goes for hospitals; one is paid for finance and one is for us.

If we have to pay back twice, how can we develop a country like ours? Mr. Speaker, I call on the Minister of Finance, on the Member of the Administration who is still his financial advisor, and on all the ministers to think about the situation and to start giving serious consideration to the possibility of amending our financial system so that it would serve Canada, our institutions.

When the financial system really reflects what we are truly doing in Canada, what our population is paying in Canada, then, Mr. Speaker, I am sure we will not have to fight poverty but that we will be able to guarantee to each and every Canadian, economic security and personal freedom.

(English)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There is a subamendment moved by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Cameron). Possibly the hon. member for Medicine Hat would permit me to read it now and then he could proceed with his remarks. It is moved by Mr. Cameron, seconded by Mr. Knowles:

That the amendment be amended by deleting therefrom all the words between the word "taxation" and the words "the sharp increase" and by substituting therefor the following words:

"particularly its failure to revise the income tax structure so that a married couple with an annual income of \$4,000 or less would not be subject to tax; its failure to remove the sales tax from building materials and supplies used in housing construction; and its failure to take any steps to deal with"

The Chair considers that the subamendment is in order.

Mr. H. A. Olson (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Monteith) speaking on behalf of the official opposition, called the budget a bad budget and used a number of other adjectives to describe it. He was followed by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Cameron), speaking on behalf of the New Democratic party, who called it no budget at all. Then we had the hon. member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette) pointing out some failures, in his opinion, with respect to financial matters.

If it is no budget at all there is very little left for me to say and perhaps I will have to do what the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands suggested, produce a