

The Budget

I want to make a final point and it is an important one as well. Collectively we all have to be sensitive to the reality today. What happens, and again it is not a partisan shot, is that people see politicians living high off the hog. They do not see us tightening our belts nearly as much as they have to and they have less. We have to understand that if they do not see us setting that example then they will want more. I think *un peu de douceur, un peu de gentillesse*, we have to reach out and talk more. We have to understand that unless all of us put a little bit of water in our wine there are going to be extremely difficult times ahead, not only constitutionally but also economically and in a number of other ways as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, while talking about the budget, my hon. colleague mentioned precisely the fact that we must spend some money in order to help students in different programs. I understand that; this is a normal thing to do. However, there is one thing that I have not heard, and that is we must set an example with specific cuts, because our government costs a lot of money.

When I say specific things—I hope the member for Laval-East will understand—I mean that we have to start making cuts that affect us. I want to ask a question of my hon. colleague. I would appreciate getting a specific answer, because I respect him a lot. We worked together on the Beaudoin-Dobbie committee and he did a tremendous job.

Today the House of Commons costs taxpayers approximately \$236 million a year. In 1986-87 that cost was \$187 million. This is an incredible increase. There are various programs whereby, for instance, members of the House can send newsletters to their constituents four times a year, and that costs some \$4.7 million. Could we not come up with a better solution to cut expenses? Could we not simply put a few ads in the local newspapers? This would help those local newspapers, that need it, as you well know. Also, why not hold press conferences when there are announcements to be made? That is my first example.

I have a second example. The former Liberal Prime Minister now gets a pension of \$81,000 a year, plus his salary as a member of the House. Since the former Prime Minister works as an hon. member, would it be not more appropriate to give him this pension once he

retires? How can a former Liberal Prime Minister get two salaries and particularly a pension?

If it is true that we must set an example in this House, why not start right here? Does the hon. member agree? I know that he will have to show fortitude to say that he does agree.

Mr. Duhamel: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question and his nice words concerning my work with the constitutional committee.

There is a former Liberal Prime Minister who gets a pension, but there is also a former leader of that party who gets a pension while occupying an excellent position. I am referring to Mr. Broadbent whom I respect a lot. There are also former ministers of the government such as Mr. Nielsen who are getting generous pensions. I believe, he was a member for many years, as well as a minister.

Mr. Edmonston: Yes, but those people are no longer members of the House.

Mr. Duhamel: No, I know, but they hold a job. All this to say that there are members from each party—and I named a few—who have worked here and are getting a pension even though in some cases they have jobs elsewhere.

Mr. Edmonston: Yes, but they are no longer members of the House.

Mr. Duhamel: No, they are not, but let me go on. I would be willing to consider any measure to proceed with an in-depth review of the pension program.

A few months ago, myself and my colleague, member for Edmonton Southwest, followed up on a bill and talked about pensions. We were not harsh. We simply asked if there was a better way to proceed. I noted that at last the NPD leader recently started talking about this. All this is to say that I am willing to review this pension issue in an honest, in-depth and serious fashion. I even wrote an article on this topic, and I would be quite willing to show it to my colleague.

With regard to these newsletters, again I am willing to look at the issue of the cost of the four newsletters that are sent every year, but I believe it is also very important to keep our constituents informed about what goes on in the House of Commons and elsewhere in the country. That is very important.