

However, the comment most often heard today is that government is not giving enough, which would tend to indicate that it has nonetheless managed to give something and to take concrete steps.

I think it is important that I rise today to help the people in the galleries, as well as those who are watching this debate at home, make allowances for what they hear from the opposition whose role it is, after all, to raise problems and mention negative aspects that do not necessarily exist.

What must be said, in my opinion, is that the budget recently tabled by our Minister of Finance meets the expectations and comments made to us in our ridings. Our constituents have requested realistic, lasting solutions to both economic and social problems, not quick fixes.

I must remind this House that upon coming to office our government inherited a \$206 billion debt. That is what makes it impossible at the present time for the government to balance its budget strictly from the point of view of its annual revenue and expenditures. Had we not inherited this debt in 1984, we would have a \$25 billion operating surplus by now. That is a lot of money.

What this means for our constituents is that in this system of ours the money they pay in taxes would be enough to finance all existing social and economic programs.

• (1130)

Unfortunately we inherited a huge debt and the recession that is going on in Canada is not exclusively made in Canada.

Even if he sits in the opposition, my hon. colleague will recognize that our partners, starting with the United States, also experience serious economic difficulties that have consequences, not only in the United States but also in Canada. We know that in Europe there are social and economic adjustments that create difficulties and that have consequences on everything that is called world markets.

I would like to tell my colleague that even if he thinks manufacturers or small businesses in his riding are not pleased, the comments that we heard go totally against what he advocates. For instance, the president of the manufacturers' association—this is not a small business

person; this is the person representing all manufacturers—Mr. Richard Le Hir mentions three measures that our government implemented in the last budget to promote economic recovery. Among other things, Mr. Le Hir said: "The accelerated capital cost allowance on machinery, the lowering of the manufacturing tax, as well as the \$230 million budgeted for research and development are three concrete measures that must be applauded". Again those are the words of the president of the manufacturers association.

The minister of finance of Quebec, Mr. Gérard D. Lévesque, who is not necessarily an unconditional supporter of our government, said that he was generally pleased with the federal budget, adding that the budget enabled Ottawa to reduce its deficit while helping the Canadian and Quebec economies to again experience a growth.

Those are a few examples. You are telling me that my time is up, but I would simply like to tell the voters that are listening that the opposition fulfills its role; it is there to say that this is a botched job. However, the population does not agree with the opposition.

Mr. Arseneault: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to tell my colleague in the government that the unemployment rate in my constituency stands at 18.2 per cent. If you look at the budget that was just tabled in the House, you will see that the budget for the Department of Employment and Immigration was reduced by \$177 million, mainly in the job creation and vocational training sectors. That says a lot.

[English]

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Restigouche—Chaleur on the compassion in his speech. I know that he understands, and every member of this House should understand, that if there was ever a time when there should be some empathy and some sympathy and some feeling and some concrete measures to be taken for the people of Canada, it is today.

The hon. member mentioned Stone Consolidated at Bathurst. I want to tell him that just within the last few days, last Friday, Stone Consolidated announced the closure of the mill at Braeside, just about 43 miles up the Ottawa River from Ottawa, and it means the loss of 160 jobs in total.