

*Government Orders*

I hear about the opposition coming back with slash and burn. That is hyperbole. We are cutting with care, care for the taxpayers, care for the unemployed and care for our social programs. That is the kind of cutting we are doing. The suggestion is they are the only ones with any compassion. There is just as much compassion and just as much heartfelt concern for our citizens on this side of the House.

I hear the doublespeak, lean but not mean. That is nothing but feel good doublespeak. It makes them feel warm and fuzzy because they are doing something but they are not being mean.

I ran a small business and I encountered tough times. I had to be mean. I had to lay off a couple of employees. I felt bad about that, but I thought about the 23 other employees for whom I was responsible. I was concerned about them. I had to be lean and I had to be mean to a couple of people. If I did not do that I would have had to have been a lot meaner to my entire staff facing unemployment.

Two years of tinkering around the edges have been a failure. In 1994 our unemployment level was 9.6 per cent. In November of 1995 it was 9.4 per cent. It has not budged. Millions of Canadians are unemployed and under employed today. So much for jobs, jobs, jobs. For two years it has been a complete and utter failure.

There is little Christmas cheer this year for those millions of people unemployed. Unfortunately unless we make a dramatic change in the thinking of the government there will be little hope for Christmas cheer in 1996. There can be hope if we commit to balancing the budget in the government's term of office. By doing that we can offer some hope for a merrier Christmas next year for those Canadians.

We can restore investor confidence in this great country of ours. If we do that they will come in and create the jobs which we need. Governments do not create jobs; the private sector will create the jobs we so badly need. That is the answer to tax relief. The only way we will get tax relief is if we get people back to work and get the economy moving.

It is the decision of the finance minister. The decision he makes in the next budget will determine whether he will be the grinch in 1996 or Santa Claus. Do not miss the opportunity. Commit in the next budget to a happier holiday season for millions of Canadians in 1996.

Madam Speaker, I wish you and all members of the House a merry Christmas and all the best in the new year.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Caron (Jonquière, BQ):** Madam Speaker, as a member of the Bloc Québécois, I am very pleased to speak on the interim report of the Standing Committee on Finance.

As you know, it is the Standing Committee on Finance's prerogative to consider the fiscal policy of the government, to make inquiries, to hear witnesses and to draw a number of conclusions. I have here the two-page preliminary report of the committee.

● (1950)

I think Canadians and Quebecers have good reason to be a bit disappointed and concerned. Not that the committee did not do some good work. It met with a lot of Canadians, held forums and seminars, heard witnesses and, as my colleague from Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup said earlier, people made some valid representations before the committee. The result however is not all that serious and conclusive.

What does this report really say? It says, first of all, that Canada's major problem is its debt, as evidenced by a quote from the 1995 report of the Auditor General of Canada. After consulting the Canadian population, after touring Canada, the committee came to the very same conclusions as the auditor general did in his report. It may not have been necessary to hold dozens of hearings to come to that conclusion.

The report also says that the Minister of Finance's objective is to see the deficit reduced to \$17 billion in 1997-98. According to the minister, this year, the deficit will be reduced to \$32 billion, next year, it will go down to \$24 billion, and in two years, it will be down to \$17 billion. That is basically what the report says.

It also states that the minister will ensure that the deficit is reduced to 2 per cent of GDP in 1997-98. That is what we are told.

First, this report is sinning by omission. When the finance minister talks of a \$32 billion deficit this year, I do not think he is telling the whole truth. I was disappointed to see that the Standing Committee on Finance did not pick up on that. It is well known that the deficit would be \$5 billion more if the finance minister had not used the UI account surplus to reduce it.

We could add that \$5 billion to this year's \$32 billion deficit according to the minister, the real deficit would then amount to \$37 billion.

I do not want to blame the minister for using this amount. This money comes from Canadians and it might be in the finance minister's interest to use it to reduce the deficit. But the finance minister should be honest about it. First of all, he should say so and, second, he should perhaps give his reasons why.