

government intends to withdraw its budget and introduce a new budget?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Finance I want to apologize for his absence. Last August he accepted an invitation to speak to the Canadian Club of Toronto for this day, at a time when no one could foresee that this would be the date of the reconvening of the House.

Mr. Crosbie: Come on!

Mr. Trudeau: I hear the former minister of finance saying "Come on". He will know that it has been a long-standing practice of ministers of finance to speak yearly to the Canadian Club of Toronto. I hope he discharged his duties in that regard, as our minister is doing today.

Mr. Waddell: He is afraid to come into the House.

Mr. Trudeau: The minister will be here tomorrow and on other days. I assure the hon. member opposite who talks about fear that I will wait to see what frightening questions he would be prepared to ask the minister, but I assure the hon. member that there are other members of the ministry in the House who would be prepared to deal with the economy.

Mr. Clark: Would you answer the question?

Mr. Trudeau: The Leader of the Opposition asked if we were going to withdraw the budget. The answer is no, Madam Speaker. The budget measures will be brought before the House for discussion as soon as possible.

TAXATION OF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I should like to speak for a moment of the responsibility of the Minister of Finance. The Canadian Club meets every week.

Some hon. Members: Order, order!

Mr. Clark: If the Minister of Finance were someone who could have been found to speak for his responsibilities prior to the House reconvening, he could have arranged to be before the Canadian Club and also in his place to stand the heat of questioning in the House of Commons on a budget which does great damage to Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: The government seems determined to go ahead with the budget. The Prime Minister will know that one effect of taxing employee benefits such as Blue Cross will be to bump thousands of Canadians into a new tax bracket without giving them any new income. These new taxes on dental care and on extended medical care will, for example, cause 60,000 Canadian mothers to lose all or part of their child tax credit. Does the Prime Minister call that equity, or is it part of the restraint

Oral Questions

program of the Government of Canada to take away and to cut back on the child tax credit program?

● (1425)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition knows that in the usual way the budget measures will be brought before the House. They will be discussed in the Committee of the Whole, and such allegations that the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition makes now, if he can substantiate them, I am sure will be interesting for the House when those measures are looked at and before they are passed.

Mr. Dick: You didn't go home for the holidays.

Mr. Trudeau: I encourage hon. members opposite to have all their questions ready because the measures will be discussed in the House and voted upon. Of course, the Minister of Finance and the rest of the ministry will be happy to look at any statistics to see if they are founded, such as those alleged by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I am amazed that the Prime Minister, who has indicated that the government intends to push through with this budget, does not know about the elemental impact it will have on ordinary Canadians across the country. I am sure that if he listened a little to his backbenchers they would tell him about some of the pressure that they have been receiving from their constituents across the country. I tell the Prime Minister that there will be debate in this House of Commons, and indeed there will be votes in this House of Commons, and if the Prime Minister thinks he is going to get this budget through quickly, then he is deeply mistaken.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: Right on.

* * *

FINANCE

EFFECT OF BUDGET ON SOCIAL BENEFITS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, let me turn now to the Minister of National Revenue and ask him a question, if I can get his attention for a moment. The Minister of National Revenue made some sweeping statements about the application of the budget and he has been backing away from them. But the minister must surely have some idea, even if his Prime Minister does not, of the impact that some of these measures will have upon ordinary individual Canadians. Despite the changes which the minister was forced to make last week, he will know the result of the rules regarding certain employee benefits is that millions of Canadians have at least \$500 a year added to their taxable income, and many will be bumped up into different tax brackets.