

Supply

suggests today ought to be taken by members of the Official Opposition.

I am not sure that the government's ability to establish priorities for those issues which are of great importance to Canadians' well-being both economically and socially has been shown to be anything but faulty. Let me just give you an example. They have had the wherewithal to make those decisions from a parliamentary point of view. The member knows that his government has used closure to ram through legislative items that it thought were important to its agenda. And yet he says he cannot today make decisions because he cannot expect that they will be put through this House.

Mr. Speaker, just think about this for a second. Over the course of the last nine years in terms of priorities established it cut energy taxes to the tune of 17.5 per cent. There is a 50.6 per cent drop in the relative value of energy taxes as indirect taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry, but I would remind the hon. member that it is not time for a speech. It is time for a brief comment or to ask a question of the previous speaker. There are other members who want to ask questions. Briefly, please.

Mr. Volpe: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for that. I was confused I guess when I saw all other members retreat by the curtain to allow me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry. The hon. member for Mississauga South.

Mr. Blenkarn: Well, that was a great ramble anyway and I rather enjoyed it. The member only has to look at the calendar. We have another three days this week and five next week. I was told the other day we have a total of 17 government days left but I suspect it is now down to 14. There are some opposition days involved and this is one of them. The fact of the matter is that to do any serious legislating one would have to be a Houdini. Legislation that involves very radical changes to the programs of the country has to be written, passed through the committee stage and so. I do not anticipate that would be at all possible. My friend knows that.

• (1545)

It is true that we have had to do a number of things over the past period of time. Every bill involving budgetary changes and reduction in government expenses has had to go to closure over the opposition's protest. You

see, Mr. Speaker, they only want to criticize and spend, they never want to cut or curtail.

Mr. Alex Kindy (Calgary Northeast): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member for Mississauga South because he was elected a long time ago. He was certainly a very active member in the House when his party was sitting in opposition.

He will probably remember when the present government was put into office in 1984 the question was whether it was going to cut expenditures. The promise in that election was that a new Conservative government under the Prime Minister would cut expenditures and balance the budget.

What have we heard in the last speech by the finance minister? He told us the government will not cut anything. It will just continue the budget. It will lay the foundation for the next budget and the next government. It had nine years to balance the budget. The government has not done it and the Liberals have not done it in the past. Why should people in Canada now believe that any of the parties are able or willing to cut expenditures and not just say they cannot because of transfer payments and this and that.

The hon. member knows very well that if there is a will it can be done. Naturally I believe if he had been Minister of Finance instead of the present Minister of Finance he would have done it but he is not and I do not think he will be.

Mr. Blenkarn: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I know each other fairly well and I always enjoy his comments.

I want to say that this is not an easy matter. The government has tried for a long period of time to grow out of the deficit by curtailing expenditures bit by bit and it has done that. It has curtailed an enormous number of expenditures but the things the Government of Canada does today are infinitely smaller than the number of things it attempted to do when it took office.

Unfortunately the debt compounds and it is in a situation where compounding debt requires action much more serious than it has had before. Part of the problem of course is the fact that there is a serious recession. Consequently income is way off. Tax revenues, as the hon. member will know, are off at least \$10 billion from what was forecasted for this year. That \$10 billion makes