

Supply

We are not looking at saving money by the millions. We have looked at saving money by the billions. The member really should know that if he has been paying attention. I do not know if he is attempting to mislead people. He knows very well that the matter of MPs' pensions is in the hands of a commission established specifically by law after every election for that purpose and that report will be coming back and we will be taking action on that report.

He also knows perfectly well that I said very clearly that the finance minister in tabling his budget said this is a two-stage budget. This is step one. We have done more cutting in this budget than in previous budgets. We have also closed some tax loopholes and he knows that very well. We paid attention to that side of the ledger as well by making sure that there is some increase in revenue and that tax breaks that certain people were getting are no longer there. However, we have done five times more in cutting expenses than we have increasing revenues through closing those tax loopholes.

The member knows perfectly well that these estimates on which he is voting today represent billions of dollars of cuts in government expenditures. I think he should be saying that honestly to the Canadians who are listening to us tonight.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, I have a very brief comment.

I think we are making some progress in this House. I noticed the hon. member has recycled very large portions of a speech that I heard the member for Calgary Southwest giving about a year ago with the respect to the fact that of course you cannot balance the budget by tinkering, of course you cannot balance it merely by cutting fat. We know that. We still would like to see some cuts but the bottom line, as members will see, in our zero in three plan with which I hope members are familiar is that if one is ever going to get the finances of this country under control, deep substantive cuts have to be made.

• (2000)

Ms. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I notice the Reform members always get up and say that without ever saying where they are going to cut or who they are going to hurt.

We know perfectly well in the analysis of their three-year deficit reduction plan that it tabled during the election campaign that that could not be done without hurting 1.5 million children in this country who live in poverty, without hurting senior citizens who depend on their pensions, without hurting single parents, two-thirds of whom live in poverty with their children. Their plan was not realistic. Their plan would have destroyed the social fabric of this country. Their plan would have destroyed any sense of justice in this country.

The member opposite has said there were not cuts. From the moment our government took office we have been reducing unnecessary expenditures. The Prime Minister was the first to set an example by getting rid of his limousine. Members know the actions that have been taken to cut the use of—

Some hon. members: Ah, gee.

Some hon. members: Good.

Ms. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry but this is ridiculous. I am saying to Canadians that we have done exactly what the Reform Party is telling us we should do and those members are sitting there saying "ah, gosh, gee". Members cannot have it both ways.

Do they want these cuts made or do they not want these cuts made? When these cuts are made, they should be giving credit. We started at the very top with our Prime Minister, then with reducing the number of cabinet ministers, with reducing the budgets that those cabinet ministers have to operate on, and with reducing our own expenditures here in this House of Commons because we know that Canadians are counting on us to set the example. We are doing that.

To suggest that we are tabling estimates that do not include several billion dollars in cuts is simply not accurate or quite honest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Questions or comments? Resuming debate. I am waiting to recognize someone who wants to speak on this motion. The hon. member for Kenora—Rainy River.

Let me see if I can be of some help to my colleagues in the House. When we began the debate on the motion, we began with the government whip. We recognized people from other parties and then came back. In this instance as we continue this debate, the last spokesperson being the parliamentary secretary, I did look to see if there was a member from the Official Opposition who wanted to speak. Not having taken notice, I then looked to this side of the House, the government side. I recognized the member for Kenora—Rainy River.

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Kenora—Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, I suggest to my colleagues across the way that I was not trying to jump in front of them as far as the speaking order of the House.

As my colleague from Beaver River would know, having sat beside her for a number of months in the last Parliament, this member would not at all be interested in doing that sort of thing.

Tonight I would like to talk about issues that are very close to my heart as they relate to the estimates. Those who have had the opportunity to spend some time with the member for Kenora—Rainy River know that my interests are the interests of a very large rural riding. In that large rural riding there are some issues that I think need to be discussed in this place.