

The Budget

Department	Committed (incl. taxes)	Print	TV	Radio
Commission of Inquiry – blood systems	21,720	11,326		
Statistics Canada	30,649	24,163		
Finance (Bank of Canada)	7,644,293	3,105,771	3,271,624	661,899
Veterans Affairs	1,636	1,636		
Industry (Tourism) Canada	764,710	240,952		
Industry Canada (aboriginal)	7,294	7,249		
National Library	95,355	51,177		
Canadian Heritage	96,859	29,761		
Public Works & Government Services	1,075,393	843,604		24,448
Health Canada	623,200			
Natural Resources	124,650			
Privy Council	436,275			
Total	12,178,357	4,920,550	3,271,624	700,823
Grand Total	\$ 12,178,357	Grand Total	\$ 8,892,997	

[English]

Mr. Milliken: I ask, Mr. Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from March 1 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government; and the amendment.

• (1010)

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party will be splitting its time.

As this House debates the budget we are discussing the very future of this country. We have already mortgaged our children's

future. They will not be paying for their own social programs. They will be paying for ours.

How can government members sit here so smugly knowing that during the course of this Parliament the amount of money that we will have to make in interest payments will increase from \$38 billion to over \$50 billion? This increase of over 30 per cent is an additional burden that will continue to grow. Billions fewer dollars will be available for social programs and government operations.

The government says this is good. Liberal members say it is all right that one-third of government spending is for yesterday's programs. They claim they are at least slowing down the rate of growth of interest payments. I do not see how it can be considered much of a consolation knowing that the country is going bankrupt at a slower rate.

All this budget does is delay the inevitable. The fact that this budget was viewed as tough is not so much a compliment to this budget, rather it is a scathing indictment of previous budgets. If previous finance ministers had been sufficiently courageous to make the necessary cuts in the past, by today's standards those cuts would have been insignificant. Because they chose not to make those required cuts, today we have to cut deeper.

The current Minister of Finance is now faced with tougher choices. He could have and should have made the rights ones. Short term pain for long term gain. Instead he took the more masochistic route of a little pain this year and even more pain in the following years.

The latest budget alludes to some of the changes that are coming but it does not have the courage to address the problems in detail, head on.

The city of White Rock in my constituency has one of the largest concentrations of seniors in the country. Almost one-third of the population is over 65 years of age. The budget tells Canadians the government will be releasing a paper later this year with changes required to the old age security and guaranteed income supplement programs to ensure their affordability. These changes are to take effect in 1997.

The budget documents make it clear that significant changes are coming. While it promises undiminished protection for all seniors who are less well off, it gives us no numbers. What does this government consider to be well off? Is it \$15,000, \$20,000 or \$25,000?

The Minister of Finance criticized the Reform Party for our taxpayers' budget which stated we would reduce the money paid to seniors by \$3 billion. The minister stated this would affect all seniors earning more than \$11,000. When we include OAS, GIS and the Canada pension plan and the fact the government pays out \$34 billion a year to seniors, \$3 billion accounts for only 8.7 per cent of this total.

Is this Minister of Finance suggesting that 91 per cent of Canadian seniors earn less than \$11,000? Maybe the \$11,000