

*The Budget—Mr. Asselin*

us, will surely have another deficit at the end of the year.

**Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate to second the amendment moved by the member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) this afternoon.

I must say that the member for Edmonton West moved an amendment which, to my mind, is realistic with regard to the financial situation of our country.

The statement made by the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) when he brought down the budget was, I think, a parody of the statements made by the members of the present government during the election campaign. At that time, according to them, Canadian finances were faring very well. We were promised a balanced budget, thorough fiscal reforms which would do away with obvious inequalities and injustices in matters of taxation.

• (9:00 p.m.)

Today, we face a budget statement filled with contradictions with regard to what expenses are foreseen, and reductions of the moneys voted for non essential programs. There is a general lack of planning in government expenditures. Those contradictions on the financial state of our country have placed the government in a strained position and we wonder about the credibility of this government in financial matters.

On May 21 last, the present Minister of Finance stated that the Canadian budget deficit for 1967-68 would amount to \$808 million, while on the 1st of June, the former minister of finance (Mr. Sharp) stated that there would be a deficit of \$740 million, which would be adjusted to \$785 million on November 30. Expenditures were 12 per cent higher than in 1966-67, while revenue had increased by only 8 per cent.

During the election campaign, Mr. Speaker, in order to secure the support of the Canadian businessmen, the minister kept repeating all over Canada that the new government would propose a balanced budget.

On June 3, 1968, at Calgary, the former minister of national revenue, who is now Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) made the following statement.

[Mr. Gauthier.]

[English]

The next budget will be a balanced one and every attempt will be made to hold the line on tax increases.

[Translation]

On June 6, 1968, the Minister of Finance, in turn, promised that a new Liberal administration would present a balanced budget. On June 18, the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau) declared also, at Fort William, that a new Liberal government would present a balanced budget.

What then has happened since June 25 that made this government hasten to forget its electoral commitments?

**Mr. Paul Langlois (Chicoutimi):** The budget is indeed well balanced.

**Mr. Asselin:** For next year it is far from sure. Would the honourable member for Chicoutimi have the cheek to get up and tell us, as the honourable Minister of Finance has done for the past six months, there is going to be a balanced budget when his estimates have shown discrepancies amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars?

Would the honourable member dare to get up and say on behalf of the Minister of Finance that the budget for next year will be well balanced notwithstanding the flagrant inconsistencies of his last budget?

Mr. Speaker, one will admit that a Minister of Finance can make a mistake, but a series of contradictory statements will never lead us to believe in the minister's good faith, and this budget clearly indicates that the Canadian people are entitled to question this government's credibility.

We have been trying for two years to make the government understand that it should cut its expenses drastically. Besides, cuts were promised to us on several occasions, when we made representations to the government.

We also asked the government to establish priorities with regard to expenditures in order to check inflation effectively. Unfortunately, this was not done and the budget is the result.

I wonder whether the minister has some notions of accounting or if his computers or his adding machines broke down, but the difference in the estimates lead us to believe that all is not well in the Department of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, a review of the budget in an Ottawa newspaper, on October 23, 1968