

Government Orders

When the former Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Turner, was finance minister, the Liberals had a 24 per cent increase from one year to the next. There was an increase in expenditures of 24 per cent in one year.

What has our government done? On average, since this government was elected in 1984, expenditures have risen 3.5 per cent.

Mr. Milliken: Rubbish.

Mr. Richardson: It is right here in the Public Accounts. It is available to any Canadian. Those are the facts. It is not the hyperbole and nonsense we have been hearing from the Liberals this afternoon. That is a fact and there it is in black and white.

An hon. member: It is over 7 per cent.

Mr. Richardson: We are talking about program spending. It is what we have control over in terms of a government and what we have control over in terms of our spending. What we do not have control over is paying off their debt.

The member says it was 7 per cent. Admittedly, we do have to have to pay the interest on the debt. The debt that was \$200 billion when we took office is now up to \$350 billion. Of that interest, \$120 billion is simply compound interest that was here when we arrived as a government in 1984.

This government has shown fiscal responsibility. Since it was elected six years ago, instead of raising expenditures at a rate of 17 per cent or 24 per cent, government spending has increased 3.5 per cent. Inflation has been over 4 per cent. So, in real dollar terms, federal spending has actually been reduced over that period.

At the same time, because of the increase in the economy, we broadened the base. More people are working. A total of 1,604,000 jobs have been created in Canada since 1984 and 86 per cent of those jobs are full-time. In contrast, 89 per cent of the jobs created by the last Liberal government were part-time jobs. A total of 966,000 jobs have been created for women. This represents 60 per cent of the total jobs created.

In 1984, when this government was elected, unemployment was 11.6 per cent. Across the country today, it is considerably reduced. It has been consistently at the level of 6.5 per cent to 7 per cent ever since. It is 7 per cent today. We still have a low unemployment level because more Canadians are working. When more Canadians are working, they pay taxes. They broaden the base. The more people paying into the pot, the greater the revenues for the country.

The expenditures that were up here with the Liberals and the revenues that were down here been brought together. In 1987 they actually crossed. For the first time in a long time, when the Conservatives came in, Mike Wilson took two-and-a-half years to get to a point where we were bringing in as much money as we were spending. We were not spending more money than we brought in, with the exception of interest on the debt.

Since 1987, and for every year since 1987 that this government has been in office and Michael Wilson has been finance minister, we have had a surplus budget. We have actually brought in more than we have spent on government programs. Wouldn't that be great? It would be great. We could lower taxes right away, but we still have to pay the compounding interest on the Liberal debt.

• (1810)

We are on the right track; we are going in the right direction. Instead of spending more than we bring in every year, we have turned it around. In the past four years, we actually spent less than we brought in, and we are starting to pay the interest on that national debt. In 1994, when we will have passed it to a sufficient point, we can then start to attack the principal of that debt and benefit all Canadians.

I want to get into a number of other areas, because I have heard such outrageous statements made by some of the opposition members this year. I thought it would be helpful for Canadians to get a grasp of what kind of mess the Conservatives inherited back in 1984. It is simply not fair to say: "You cannot keep going back there and blaming those Liberals. Gosh, they were thrown out of office six years ago."

Unfortunately for all Canadians, we could not throw out their debt with them. We inherited that debt. Had we