

The Budget—Mr. Hnatyshyn

friend from York Centre. However, if the co-chairman of the Joint Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments does not understand the importance of regulatory reform as it concerns good management and efficient delivery of Government services, then I am a little leery about the paucity of understanding on the part of the Official Opposition with respect to any economic issue. I can say nothing further except that we would be only too happy to give serious consideration to suggestions on the part of the Official Opposition concerning this Budget if they have any.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I do not share the same concern that my friend across the way had with respect to the budget policies of the Government. I do not think anyone really does. However, I want to ask my colleague, the Government House Leader, to elaborate on one point. We brought in a Budget which was almost bang on with what a committee suggested a Budget should be in the early part of the year. The Estimates were linked very closely with the Budget; I think they came down the day after. Hand in hand with our efforts to tie down the deficit left to us by the previous Liberal Government, there was an effort to make sure that we regulate smarter. Part of the cost of Government is the number of people we have examining regulations, putting them into effect and enforcing them. Perhaps my colleague could comment on the cost to the Canadian taxpayer of regulations which may be inappropriate or out of date as Canada moves toward the end of the 20th century.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, my Parliamentary Secretary makes a very valid observation with respect to the juxtaposition of regulatory reform in connection with the total fiscal and economic policy of this Government. A task force dealt with regulatory reform and looked at the wide ranging implications of regulations for Canada. It was pointed out by way of example—and this was the most conservative assertion possible on the basis of advice we received from experts in the field—that regulations impact on Canadians to the extent of some \$30 billion. Consider that in the regulatory process there are some 35,000 public servants involved directly and, I suppose, indirectly. This means that a very large part of Government is involved in law-making behind the scenes. This has a very serious and wide-ranging effect on the daily lives of Canadians. Regulations cover food inspection, hazardous products, transportation, shipping and fisheries, to name a few, not to mention agriculture which is a matter of substantial importance to me, being from the Province of Saskatchewan. This gives you an idea of the wide range of activities affected by regulations which are not made on the floor of the House of Commons. They are created behind the scenes and promulgated in a conveyor belt process, as I said, by Cabinet.

What we are doing now is trying to bring some light to the process. It is absolutely essential, for example, that we enter into a process where all new regulations are measured against their social cost and cost efficiency so that a judgment can be made by the people involved in the political life of our country, including Members of Parliament, as to their validity.

I say this in all seriousness to the Hon. Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan). He has had some experience with regulations, as have I, in sitting for many years on that committee. If the people of Canada had an opportunity to look at this, they would be astounded and amazed just how much law and constraint on their activities is effected outside of this Chamber. There is a phenomenal amount of regulation of people taking place.

For example, the committee has been doing excellent work in examining whether or not officials are arbitrary; whether or not our freedoms are negatively affected by regulations; whether or not principles of natural justice are observed in the drawing up of regulations. These laws, and that is what they are, are drawn up in the bureaucracy without the same sort of scrutiny that laws in the statute books receive on the floor of this House. There are certainly no television cameras watching and no public discussion. It is done by people who have a responsibility but also a kind of self-interest with respect to the nature and form of regulations. In my view, the Parliamentary Secretary has highlighted the significance of this problem and the necessity for the Government to enter into a new regime of measuring what is being done regarding the economic welfare of Canadians.

I do not want to take any more time but I do want to reiterate that under this new regime Canadians are going to become, so far as the federal level is concerned, world leaders in regulatory reform. This is a very, very progressive initiative we are taking. I am very proud to be associated with it because I know the long history of this issue. I say this is a non-partisan sense. There has been a desire by all Parties to come to grips with the growing volume of regulation and make sure there is some rationale to the regulations which affect the daily lives of our fellow citizens so very much.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The period provided for questions and comments has now expired. Debate. The Hon. Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan).

[English]

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to what the Government House Leader had to say about the initiatives he is taking in regulatory reform. I have remarks I want to make on the Budget, of course, but I welcome very much, and I think all Canadians should as well, what is being proposed by the Government House Leader concerning regulatory reform. We may be—and I say “may be” because I want to see what happens before I congratulate the Government—seeing a real breakthrough here in the way in which delegated legislation and other statutory instruments are handled. As chairman of the committee concerned, I appreciate his remarks about the nature of our work. It is dull, it does not get public attention even when egregious wrongdoing is found in the way in which regulations are processed, simply because they affect the rights of Canadians indirectly, not directly. However, that is important, too, and I appreciate