

The Budget

I would like the hon. member, who happens to be on the social programs committee, to explain to me how this budget fits in with his stated goal of Canada taking control of its finances. Being on the social programs committee, can this member explain how social programs will be funded down the road when \$12 billion more will be spent on interest payments within two years, and then ever increasingly more beyond the two years?

Mr. Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, it is merely a question of balance. It would be ridiculous to annihilate social programs in the interests of saving them. Consequently, we have to find the place in the system where we strike the balance that allows the programs to be affordable.

I have great faith in the wisdom of Canadians. They were presented with the option put forward in this budget of a target of 3 per cent at the end of the third year and were also presented with the option put forward by the Reform Party. They picked our solution. I have some faith in the good judgment of not just the Minister of Finance and my colleagues in the government, but also the good judgment of Canadians who chose a balanced approach.

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, a point of order. I believe that every member should be permitted to speak in this house, particularly on issues like this debate.

However, I note that in the last House our party had one independent member, the hon. member for Beaver River. When she was in the House the Conservatives consistently dealt her out of being able to enter into debates.

I wonder if the Chair might be able to explain to the House under what rules the next member is permitted to speak, considering that he, as a member of the previous government, did everything he could to stop our member from being able to speak.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Kootenay East raises an important point. There are about 300 members in the House. On a mathematical basis, the unrecognized party members are entitled to speak about one every 25th slot. We are at that point now, approximately. I take the point of the hon. member for Kootenay East because I sat in the corner back there, too. I know exactly what the member is talking about.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will not pursue the point of order except to say that maybe the hon. member for the Reform Party should let go at one point in time. When does he think kicking someone around should stop, if that is the case? Or does he feel that we have abused our privileges in this place? Anyhow, we probably witnessed a new definition of what meanness is in this place, but for many reasons, I am a lot more interested today in addressing the issues relative to this budget.

This budget has the advantage of putting things into focus and perspective in regard to a few elements that are important to Canadians. First is where the Liberals really stand on these

issues and what their real agenda is or is not. It puts into perspective the previous accomplishments of other governments and what their records mean and what do they not mean. It also brings into perspective the real issues we have to address.

I wish to begin by being as frank and straightforward as possible. There are things in this budget we agree with. There are things in this budget that we think are positive for the country. We intend to support those proposals that are positive and constructive.

I do not think it is very useful for us to enter into any phoney indignation on budget night in terms of what the budget is all about. It is not useful to stray around with inflated vocabulary that only rings false in the ears of the Canadian public when they try to look at this budget.

• (1200)

Frankly, in trying to assess how the government needs to deal with this issue, anything I have heard is that Canadians want government to succeed. Canadians want the government to do well in dealing with the budgetary and fiscal problems facing the country. They do not want to see the government face another crisis. On the contrary, they hope that it will make the right decisions. It is very much in that spirit that I would like to offer my thoughts and comments today.

The most interesting part—I happen to be one of the few members in this place who has a view on this because I happened to be in the other Houses—is that this budget also brings into perspective the policies and positions of the Liberal Party of Canada. That has to be one of the first assessments that we need to make about the budget.

To be brutally frank, it needs to be said that the budget is a denial of the principles espoused by the Liberal Party during its nine years in opposition, a repudiation of the policy it placed before the Canadian electorate 16 months ago, an abandonment of those people whose defenders the Liberal Party pretended to be.

For nine years Liberals purported to defend old age pensioners against any reductions in benefits, to fight for the jobless against changes in unemployment insurance, to maintain the annual increases in parliamentary grants to VIA Rail, to the CBC and to all the cultural agencies. They called for the expansion of day care.

The parliamentary secretary this morning even had the temerity to raise day care when if one reads page 40 of the red book as Canadians have, one will find there is a clear commitment to increase day care spaces by 50,000 a year the moment the economy goes beyond 3 per cent.

Is there anything about that in the budget now? That was the Liberal position. They vowed to stand shoulder to shoulder with single mothers, with poor families, with refugees and immigrants, with the regionally disadvantaged, with the sick, with