

Government Orders

Reference to the Olympics would be fair and accurate because the Liberals do have this new Olympic sport. It is called low hurdles. No matter how tough it is, you can only bruise your shins going over the Olympic low hurdles of the Liberals.

We know we have to take some serious hits and Canadians by and large are prepared for it. They are anticipating it and want to do it. We do not want to leave a bankrupt country to our grandchildren. The essence is that it must be fair. If it is not fair, it will not meet with public acceptance on a broad base.

My specific question has to do with the fairness of the budget. It has to do with the Public Utilities Income Tax Transfer Act. How is it that this affects one province disproportionately, the province of Alberta? It affects Nova Scotia and Alberta, no other province in Canada.

The hon. parliamentary secretary said that the reason it is being cut is that it is not being passed along from the province to the individual taxpayer. Does it matter? Is it any business of the federal government what the provincial governments do with that money? It does not belong to the federal government; it belongs to the province.

The idea behind that tax was to ensure that all utilities were treated fairly. An enterprise that establishes itself in Nova Scotia or in Alberta has relatively the same base of taxes for its utility demands.

The hon. member's arm must now be relaxed after all that patting himself on the back. Would he speak to the fairness of two provinces, Nova Scotia and Alberta, being singled out for this punitive tax measure, which is \$70 for every single homeowner in either province?

Mr. O'Brien: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague.

I recall for him that I applauded the efforts of the finance minister. Then again, I just joined the vast majority of Canadians who are neither in the Reform Party nor perhaps Reform Party supporters in applauding the minister for a job very well done.

• (1215)

As to the specific question, it is interesting that my colleague singled out Alberta. I would not say he was whining, but I am tempted to think that it sounded a bit like a NIMBY type complaint. Then he corrected himself because he heard information from this side of the House that Nova Scotia was being hit by the same measure.

It was not something that was aimed at the province of Alberta. My colleague had to correct himself in asking his question. The government felt there was no good reason for the measure in that it had to be reformed and it was not aimed at one particular province.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member. If his constituents are so pleased, is it not because the government is hiding the truth? Did the hon. member tell his constituents that the federal government was not making any effort to recover the \$6.6 billion in unpaid taxes? Did he tell his constituents that they are the ones who will end up paying for the cuts of over \$7 billion in federal transfers to the provinces, because the Minister of Finance lacked the courage to put his own fiscal house in order, and chose instead to dump his deficit problems on the provinces?

Did he also tell his constituents that 70,000 companies did not pay taxes, including CN, which made profits of \$400 million and did not pay one cent? Mr. Tellier is certainly privileged. Does the hon. member tell the truth to his constituents?

[English]

Mr. O'Brien: Madam Speaker, I ask for the indulgence of my colleague to give me the gist of the question again. I had to step outside as he began his remarks.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Could the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot repeat his question?

Mr. Loubier: Madam Speaker, this is ridiculous. I am not going to repeat all that I said.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Fine. I was not sure if you were expecting an answer or not.

[English]

Mr. Murray Calder (Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on Bill C-76, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget. I am reminded of how different one year in the life of a government can be. A year ago following our first budget we were roundly scolded by both the media and our constituents that we needed to do more to cut the size of government to address the deficit.

One year later we have listened, consulted and acted. Not surprisingly we have a budget that has been roundly praised by the media and our constituents as being pragmatic and realistic, a budget for our times.

There are times when fundamental changes must be faced. For Canadians 1995 is a time when choices and change are still possible without destroying the ideals or the principles we as Canadians hold dear.

The government came into office because it believed that jobs and growth must be the nation's top priority if we are to create a climate of economic well-being for all Canadians. To achieve our goal we must act now to restore the nation's fiscal health.