

Government Orders

I am going to quote the global economic study released in June of last year that revealed that the tax burden faced by an average Canadian family was \$1,530 greater in 1991 than it was in 1984. In 1991, Canadian households paid a total of \$17.2 billion more in taxes, net of transfers, than they would have paid if the 1984 tax system were still in place—\$17.2 billion. Even families earning less than \$10,000 on average, and that is not very much money, experienced a small increase of \$85 in federal taxes.

• (1810)

The impression that one would like to have and certainly one that the government would like to create is that the latest budget offers Canadians a significant tax break when in fact it does not. The reduction in the personal income surtax, and I would remind you, this is a tax that was introduced by the Conservative government in 1986 and subsequently increased on two occasions, offers very little relief to Canadians. You have heard the figures many times. I am not going to repeat them.

Essentially it benefits high income earners more than low income earners. The only figure I want to quote is that for a family of four with a combined income of \$15,000, this tax cut will result in savings of only \$2 for 1992 whereas if the same family had an income of \$75,000, they would have saved \$74 in 1992.

I remember the first budget of this government. I was not a member of Parliament at the time, but the first budget was in May 1985. The comment was made in that budget that this budget represented a major step toward controlling the growth of the federal debt.

The prediction was made that the deficit would be \$33.8 billion in that year, but in fact it turned out to be \$34.6 billion. The federal debt that needed controlling at that time was \$224 billion. After seven more budgets, seven more years, the budget now stands from \$34.6 billion all the way down to \$31.5 billion, a decrease of practically nothing compared to each promise that was made in each budget at a time when the economy was relatively healthy, at a time when the goods and services tax was put on to Canadians, at a time when taxes were raised on the average Canadian \$17.2 billion, at a time when social services were cut, unemployment insurance. The government got out of unemployment insurance. VIA Rail was cut. Health insurance is beginning to look

a little bit marginal, social programs that were supposed to be a social trust.

I do not understand why the deficit is still the way it is. One of the things I wanted to quote here in the time that I have remaining is a C.D. Howe Institute analysis of the February 1987 budget. I happened to come across it and if you would just permit me to finish off here. The title of it was "An Opportunity Missed" and it said in 1987:

In the face of the increasing difficulty in maintaining the appearance of downward deficit track, the government has resorted to asset sales and fiscal tricks to fulfil its principles. This is not the way to reduce the underlying imbalance between spending and revenues. It is merely a way to finance it. The ongoing budget deficit appears to be stuck at just over \$30 billion.

That is what they said. This seems to be the situation today. Five years later, this Minister of Finance rose to tell us that the budget was going to be around \$31 billion which was higher than last year, which was higher than the year before and the year before that.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking for some improvement. I regret to say that this budget has not produced it.

Mr. Ray Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, tonight I would like to address my remarks to a program that the federal government attempted to impose on the transportation system on the coast of British Columbia. That was the program to destaff the lighthouses, essentially to remove staff and automate them.

The coast of British Columbia is about 500 miles of the worst place to conduct transportation anywhere in this country. It is mountains, oceans, continuous fog, rain and storms off the Pacific. There are only two ways to get back and forth and that is by aircraft or by vessel.

The destaffing of the lighthouses, and this is the second time the government has tried it, is really putting a major hole in the transportation safety net on the coast of B.C. British Columbians are firmly convinced that this will impact their lives and safety in the work they do and in their transportation.

The cancellation of that ill-founded and ill-conceived destaffing program resulted from what was an uprising on the coast of B.C. There were meetings held in Prince Rupert, well attended meetings of people who were irate, concerned and committed to doing something about it. They attended meetings in Prince Rupert, Port Hardy, and Campbell River. There were meetings scheduled in Victoria, Nanaimo, Parksville in the Alberni area,