

The Budget—Mr. Johnston

Let us not delude ourselves. Achieving full economic renewal will take sustained effort and time.

[English]

This budget is realistic. It is fair. It tackles our problems as they exist and as this government faced them on taking office last September. When we set out the problems and our directions for solving them in November, we were not building illusions. We were honest with Canadians. We accepted our mandate for change and we made clear that implementing and adjusting to change would test the strength and the resolve of all of us.

We promised to act, but first we promised to consult fully and openly with Canadians in reaching the decisions that I have presented to you today.

We received good advice from Canadians on a great many issues and that advice is reflected in this budget.

We have acted to control and reduce deficits in a balanced and careful way that will not tip the economy off its current course of growth. But we have acted with firmness and determination because without control of our accumulating debt, our economy would be unable to produce the satisfying jobs we need.

[Translation]

We have carefully balanced the measures in this budget so that costs and benefits will be fairly shared. The budget brings forward a number of measures and proposals designed to improve social programs and increase tax fairness.

[English]

The actions in this budget reflect our faith in people, in the ingenuity and the drive of individual Canadians to seize opportunities and to invest in their own future. We have brought forward measures which encourage Canadians to invest, on their own initiative, in the building of new existing enterprises.

[Translation]

This budget is far-reaching in its impact. It is a clear break from the past.

[English]

We Canadians understand more and more the limits of what governments can do. It is now time to show what we can do—individually and together—when the opportunity is there.

That is why the Agenda for Economic Renewal in November focused on providing the conditions for productive economic growth rather than attempting to impose or to direct that growth. That is why budget places the emphasis on rewarding success rather than subsidizing effort.

People working together provide the enduring strength of this nation. This budget builds on that strength.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri-Westmount): Mr. Speaker, I noticed that the Minister of State for Finance (Mrs. McDougall) had the good sense not to come forward and shake the hand of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson).

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Johnston: She is probably one of the few people in the House who actually knows what the Budget contains. Some of us who have had the opportunity of looking at it in a preliminary way would have to agree that this is one of the worst Budgets that has ever been presented in the House of Commons.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps Members of the House would give this Hon. Member the same courtesy that was given to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Speaker, I also want to tell my colleagues that I intend to be brief because this has virtually left me speechless, and I intend to resume tomorrow morning. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that when Frank Miller was the Treasurer of Ontario, they found his Budget in the garbage before he delivered it. I can say that this Minister should have been so fortunate. The garbage bins must still wait a few days.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) is here. I hope that he elects to participate in the budget debate. When he does, we expect him to rise in his place and apologize to the Canadian people for the breach of trust, the breach of the promises he made during the election campaign and the breach of commitments which he has given to Canada since assuming office.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnston: How often have we heard from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance that there would be no general tax increase, but, putting the best complexion on it, this is one of the most massive, regressive tax increases that we have seen in this country. In addition, I remind the Prime Minister that on December 20 he stood in this House and, in reply to a question from the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau), he said, "There will be no reduction in the tax exemption for families". That is something that he foresaw, and here it is.

The minimum tax that we heard so much about during the election campaign, where is it? Instead, we have a discussion paper. The measure has been lobbed offside and it will be discussed, consulted and so on. We were told that it will come in 1986, but there is no model put forward upon which any proposal could be based.

● (1800)

[Translation]

So, Mr. Speaker, he simply has failed to live up to his promises. He has imposed taxes which are unacceptable to the Canadian people.