

*The Budget*

aside and let the chips fall. Their theory is that the economy will adjust, that we will all be better off in the long run if government simply gets out of the way.

In the meantime, and it is a mean time, slash and burn economic policies have a terrible impact on the social fabric of society.

[Translation]

I learned a few things when I was working for the monetary fund in Washington.

[English]

One of the things I learned is that slashing expenditures alone, what we call shock therapy, leads inevitably to serious costs to society and fails to restore fiscal health. We must control expenditures and foster growth. That is the course we have set. We should beware of those who would prescribe quack diets.

[Translation]

Our vision is different. We cannot define Canada in terms of winners and losers. What matters to us is improving the quality of life of all Canadians so that they can all be winners.

The government has a role to play in revitalizing the economy and in preserving the social fabric. Canada has always been a land of prosperity and Canadians have always prospered under a government which could play that role, even in times of fiscal restraint. As the budget indicates, our government must take an active part in the economic, social and cultural life of this country.

[English]

This budget demonstrates that this government understands its responsibilities to the people of Canada. For Canada and for Canadians to prosper, government must neither stand aside nor stand in the way. Government must stand alongside Canadians.

• (1115)

I know the government cannot do everything. There are worthy things we simply cannot afford to support. We have made tough choices in this budget but I believe we have made the right choices. We were listening to Canadians in the pre-budget consultations.

[Translation]

As a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, I look forward to listening to the views of Canadians on the thrust of the economic policy.

[English]

The government understands the reality we are faced with today and is prepared to do that which is necessary to be fiscally responsible. Controlling spending is a priority for this government. This budget begins the long and difficult task of reversing the debt and deficit spiral. The budget incorporates a more

ambitious deficit reduction plan on the expenditure side than any budget in the last decade.

We will not blame the previous government for the sorry state of Canada's financial affairs. We are prepared to be judged by how we deal with the hand we have been dealt by the world we find. This budget is a first step in a longer process which began on October 25 to restore fiscal health and preserve the social justice which defines Canada.

The government will not solve Canada's problems by creating a permanent underclass in this country. Those who need help most will always have the assistance they require. I will work with the government to identify and support the role that government can and should be playing.

Government can and should bring people together, set goals, provide leadership, make sure the job gets done fairly and effectively. That is what this budget is all about. The government understands it has a role to play in helping people find decent work, in helping restore their confidence. Even in difficult economic times government must respond to the needs of Canadians and Canadians need jobs.

The budget accomplishes this in two ways. The infrastructure program is putting people to work now. In looking to tomorrow, to tomorrow's workers and the jobs they must have, the budget establishes a national literacy program, a youth service corps, internship and apprenticeship programs, and innovative programs for small business.

I am confident that together with the people of Canada we can solve the riddle of the 1990s. We will be able to have a caring society, a vital cultural life, and a viable economy. We are up to the challenge.

[Translation]

We, as members of Parliament, must do our job, but Canadians too must do their share and keep on believing in what we can accomplish together. All citizens of our great country must recognize and accept their responsibilities towards this society and do their share. We must regain confidence in our common future.

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup):** Madam Speaker, I was rather surprised by the speech of my colleague, because my vision of the budget is entirely different from his.

How can he say that we are going to improve the quality of life in Canada, when the qualifying period for unemployment insurance has been raised from 10 to 12 weeks at a time when people are experiencing a very difficult economic situation in the regions of Quebec and Canada? How can he say that reducing the number of weeks of insurable employment for an individual to be eligible to UI benefits will improve the quality of life of Canadians? I believe that Liberals will have to admit, at the very least, that their budget is a conservative one.