

Supply

• (1950)

There is another \$20 billion that the Minister of Finance perhaps would need some help in writing cheques for if we had no public service, no government operations; \$20 million to Canadian seniors for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement as well as another \$19 billion to the unemployed.

Perhaps people who complain about fat and waste could tell us how we can possibly solve the deficit problem by getting rid of the government.

Canada has just recently been rated by the United Nations once again as the best place in the world to live. This is something all Canadians should be proud of. It has not happened by accident. It has not been achieved without a cost either. We have been borrowing to finance our programs, programs which many Canadians have come to view as a right of citizenship.

The public accounts of Canada show that in the 10 years from 1984 to March 1993 the debt of the federal government has more than doubled to just over \$500 billion. As a result this year's main estimates provide for interest charges of \$41 billion or 25 per cent of the budget on that debt.

If we add another \$11 billion for defence and \$5 billion for crown corporations we begin to get a picture of where the money goes. We spend money on what Canadians want and need and that is what these estimates are all about. That is also why we have a deficit.

Part I of the estimates provides a comprehensive overview of the government's expenditure plans. I recommend it to all Canadians who want to know how their money is spent. I recommend it to all Canadians who want to participate in a meaningful and positive way in the budget consultations that will take place this fall.

[Translation]

So it is not being honest to tell taxpayers that we only need to cut some fat to alleviate the tax burden, or that it is possible to significantly reduce spending with no one feeling any real adverse effect.

To try to make Canadians believe that there is a quick fix and that the government is not prepared or able to apply it, undermines the confidence of Canadians in their democratic institution. When they hear about these so-called quick and simple solutions, Canadians are less apt to realize that some hard and vital decisions must be made.

My comments may sound somewhat like propaganda, but I want to tell this House that the government intends to ask members from all parties, as well as the general public, to participate in a comprehensive discussion on the importance of the budget. To that end, we must question the very nature of government spending. I would like to conclude, for the benefit

of those who might still be sceptical, by referring to some comments made by the Auditor General.

[English]

In his 1991 annual report the Auditor General said that he had an impression that a dedicated, competent public service is dealing with complex problems that have developed over the years. He also stated: "The deficit is not a result of bureaucrats burning the taxpayers' money but rather the reasons for the deficit are profound, complex and difficult to solve. I sense that there are few easy fixes".

In his 1992 report he went on to say that the reality is that governments alone do not create deficits. International forces beyond our control and the needs and demands of the electorate also contribute to deficits.

I would like to conclude with a final piece of advice from our Auditor General also from the 1992 report: "There is a need today for full and frank discussion about deficit, debts and related public policy choices".

• (1955)

I invite members of the House today to begin that frank, honest, open discussion and I assure Canadians that this government will give them the opportunity to be part of that debate as well, well before the budget for 1985-96 is prepared, well before the tabling of the next version of these estimates.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of comments.

We all realize that to eliminate the deficit like that is an impossibility. One does not have to have the brains of a rocket scientist to figure that one out. However, what puzzles me is when we hear the rhetoric from that side of the House. Surely we are not ready to give up prison guards, food inspectors, air traffic controllers. We know the difference between essentials and waste.

However, how come when we hear speakers from that side of the House we do not hear such things as contributions to MP pensions which are somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$17 million per year? How come we do not hear about Challenger jets that ought to be gone? How about blue limousines that we could do without? How about free residences and all the other things of that nature that amount to several millions of dollars? Why do we not ever hear that?

Ms. Catterall: Madam Speaker, I do not know if the member came in late, if he was not listening, if he was too busy talking to his colleagues over in the corner or if he has not read the estimates that he is now preparing to vote on later this evening. Had he and had he been listening since he walked into this House in January he would have seen our government tackling virtually every one of the issues he just mentioned and many more.