

*Supply*

This is all Liberal policy. It has been pronounced by the Liberal finance critic, the Member for Etobicoke North (Mr. MacLaren). The article goes on to say:

On the \$29-billion-a-year deficit, MacLaren said that unless the government takes "severe remedial action in this coming budget", the deficit will rise.

"It seems to me vitally important that we ensure that under any cost-cutting program that those who are really needy—not only receive what they are receiving now but receive more because there are pockets of real need in this country".

Programs such as family allowances and old age security should be available to those in need, he said.

"Perhaps the most effective way of ensuring that Canadians in need receive adequate amounts of support is—for those who don't require such support—tax it back", he said.

Who speaks for the Liberal Party, the finance critic or some other person who gets up and spouts off a lot of specious nonsense as the hon. gentleman did today? Who speaks for the Liberal Party? Does anyone speak for it, do 100 people speak for it? Will 100 flowers flourish? When will you get your act together? How can Canadians trust you for one second when they do not know from one minute to the next who is going to say what or who speaks for the Party? Was your finance critic right when he said that every sparrow that falls is going to be blamed on the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement? Who speaks for the Party?

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, it is always entertaining to hear from the Hon. Member from Newfoundland. He has adopted the old trick in this House that government Members have used since 1984. When they fall into difficulty with their budgetary measures, as the Minister did in 1979 with a very regressive tax—the 18 cent man—what do they do? The Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) gets up and hollers, screeches and makes no sense whatsoever.

The Hon. Member refers to an article. He knows that my colleague was being asked about a number of possibilities which the Government might implement. He explained those possibilities. It is the Government which must bear responsibility and must shoulder the burden of singling out the poor and middle-income Canadians for its assault in order to improve its treasury bonds. It is members of the Government who must shoulder that burden, not those of us in the Opposition. They have a mandate and they should respond to the Canadian people with fairness and with dignity.

**Mr. Hovdebo:** Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree to a great extent with the comments of the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall). However, will he explain the difference between the freeze imposed by the Liberal Government in the early 1980s with its six and five program, and the deindexing that is being done by the Government at this time?

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, I thought the Hon. Member was here when those particular measures were introduced and debated very forcefully and enthusiastically at the time. He certainly knew that as a result of world-wide recession, which had great impact on the Canadian economy, different measures had to be taken.

I suggest to the Hon. Member that the six and five program to which he refers was one of limited duration, and not a program that would go on forever as a result of the particular tax measures the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) has introduced, not only in this Budget but indeed in previous Budgets. That is the distinction the Hon. Member ought to be cognizant of.

**Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, two days ago the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) spoke in moving terms about what the House of Commons could be at its best. He said:

This is and remains the forum of the nation. This is the highest court in the land. This is the place where finally issues must be decided.

He continued by expressing his concern that we must act to make Parliament relevant as a place where the vital issues facing Canada can be decided. All of us who love this institution share his belief of what the House of Commons can be and his sense of what it all too frequently has become.

My fear is that growing numbers of Canadians find not only Parliament but political debate itself hollow and irrelevant. Our political Parties should be offering our citizens competing visions of Canada. Instead, sadly, partisanship too frequently displaces policy, and posturing substitutes for principle.

The motion proposed by the Liberal Party today does not advance the quality of our political debate. Instead, it debases our discussions by misrepresenting the Government's policies without offering Canadians an alternative economic course to follow.