

The Budget—Mr. Deniger

[English]

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Madam Speaker, I have two questions, No. 810 and No. 811, which have been on the order paper now for six months. In view of the fact that they deal with the expenditures of the Metric Commission I was wondering if the parliamentary secretary would see fit to have these questions answered as soon as possible.

Mr. Collette: Madam Speaker, I have made a note of the two questions. I should say that we have answered 1,165 questions of the approximately 1,600 questions on the order paper, which is not a bad performance.

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[Translation]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Madam Speaker: May I add that all notices of motion stand?

Some hon. Members: Stand.

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[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, as soon as I can catch the attention of the government House leader, I believe that there is a disposition to carry on the budget debate today with the regular length of speeches, and that tomorrow the time for speeches will be limited for all members of the House to 20 minutes. If this is the disposition, we are prepared to agree to that arrangement.

Mr. Knowles: Madam Speaker, the remark just made by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) does represent the discussions which have been held. We would be willing to agree that all speeches tomorrow be limited to 20 minutes.

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, we agree.

Mr. Nielsen: Perhaps that can be made an order of the House today.

Madam Speaker: Is it agreed and so ordered?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

● (1540)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed, from Tuesday, November 4, 1980, consideration of the motion of Mr. MacEachen that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr. Pierre Deniger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Madam Speaker, I am indeed enormously proud of and grateful for the continued support of the voters in the Laprairie riding, which is made up of the cities of Saint-Lambert, LeMoyne, Greenfield Park, Brossard, Laprairie and Candiac, as I rise this afternoon to take part in this most important debate on the budget which was presented last week by the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen).

Madam Speaker, I should like to mention first of all how difficult it is to govern in 1980 at whatever level in such an immense territory as the northern hemisphere. In my opinion, regionalism has never been promoted so intensely in Canada, thereby limiting a Canadian dimension which is nevertheless so necessary for a proper analysis of the national budget.

In a budget for all Canadians, is it possible to please the ten provincial leaders? I do not think so. However, I think you can please all the Canadians. They have in fact a reason to be proud of their Minister of Finance and of their Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde), because this fiscal policy accompanied by a national energy policy based on security, sharing and fairness will benefit them, Madam Speaker. Let us be realistic. Canada has a deficit of \$14 billion.

With all its national responsibilities, the government will simply no longer have the means to continue the implementation of its various programs such as unemployment insurance, family allowances, old age security pensions, equalization payments and various transfers of funds from the federal to provincial governments while still subsidizing oil imports in the east, if we do not increase income or reduce expenditures. Obviously, Madam Speaker, oil imports, or rather the funds we give to subsidize oil imports in the east are draining our economy. We must take the bull by the horns without delay and face the music, Madam Speaker, and that is what is proposed in this budget. Rising prices of oil and natural gas are beefing up provincial treasuries. And in order to ensure uniform energy prices throughout Canada, the government had to compensate eastern Canada consumers.

In my view, it would have been quite immoral to penalize the eastern provinces by preventing them benefiting from a resource which, for the time being, seems to be vested in the