

*The Budget*

that hindsight is a great thing. The recommendation we made last spring, almost a year ago, that the Governor should reduce interest rates was absolutely wrong. I have to say that very publicly, and I do fully support that inflation has to be addressed. Yes, I know that high interest rates cause problems throughout this country, but the alternative of high inflation will cause far more serious problems than the problem the governor is creating through interest rates. Very clearly I support the government's fight against inflation.

I have listened to other comments in debate and yet, yesterday for example, a number of members of the Opposition did not talk about the direction the budget was going. They talked about the goods and services tax. That is not a direction of the budget. As a member of the finance committee and one who has listened to all the debate on the goods and services tax and has actively taken part in it, I was shocked. If this budget is so disastrous, how could these members talk about the goods and services tax and not the budget? Obviously they did not have anything they really wanted to emphasize out of the budget that disturbed them, so they had to go to another issue that was politically a little more acceptable for them to talk about.

• (1550)

There was even a member who talked about the free trade agreement and how bad it was. I am not sure what the free trade agreement has to do with this budget. I checked through it all and I do not see any particular program being cut. I do not see any particular revenue earmarked against free trade or losses against free trade. Again, the problem was that they just could not find what they wanted to talk about in this budget. There were just not enough negatives for them and they certainly did not want to talk about all the good things. That leaves it up to members of the governing party to talk about the good things.

Before I get to the good things, there is this feeling of leadership that is required. I mentioned at the outset that leadership was required; it was not necessarily popular, but I do believe it was right. I have listened to members here complain about their part of Canada

being terribly affected by this budget. I do not know, Madam Speaker, if you have seen this particular article, but in *The Globe and Mail* this morning, columnist Jeffrey Simpson listed some articles from across Canada that comment on the budget. If you wanted to describe it as leadership, I would certainly support that.

Let me read some of the headlines:

B.C. battered by Wilson's budget—Alberta pays Wilson's tab—Budget hits Saskatchewan hard—\$3-billion cuts hit hardest at Ontario—An "unjust" blood-letting of \$220-million for Quebec—Budget ignored promised aid for fishermen.

We have gone from one end of this country to another and they are all saying that they have been picked on. What this says is that we have asked all Canadians to recognize that we have a deficit. It takes some leadership to deal with that deficit. No part of Canada is being asked to pay its undue share in the problems this country faces. That is what I call leadership.

Having listened to the other members, Mr. Simpson's final comment is probably the most appropriate one I can pass on to some of my colleagues in this House. I quote:

With a debt heading toward \$400-billion and a projected deficit, despite the cuts, of \$28.5-billion next year, it would be fascinating to hear how the usual suspects and regional tub-thumpers would have acted. Chances are their "solutions" would have varied as much as their criticisms.

Certainly in the case of one party we know what its solutions are because it was in government long enough to prove that it knew how to spend money.

**An hon. member:** That was the problem.

**Mr. Soetens:** Now I would like to talk about some of those positive features I mentioned were in the budget.

So that I do not mislead anyone at the outset, I have to say that this budget is not perfect. As long as we have a deficit in any budget presentation, I know there is room for improvement. However we are going in the right direction. The deficit is going down. This budget clearly shows that there is some light at the end of the tunnel. We can see when we stop paying or increasing the debt. In fact in the budget there is some direction that indicates we are going to start paying it back. I find that very comforting. Although it is not perfect it is going an awful long way toward being perfect.