

Supply

As we proceed over the next few years, politicians should be committed to looking at every government program and policy on a zero base. We should justify everything we do.

We should be saying to people: Certainly we want to ensure that there is free universal access to medicare. Certainly we want to ensure the integrity of the Canada Pension Plan. Certainly we want to make sure that unemployment insurance and support for the unemployed is there. Sure we want manpower training. Yes, there will be transfers to the provinces, but are they being administered efficiently? Is everything being done to make sure they are viable and rational programs?

Sacred cows no longer are going to be tolerated in this country. Canadians will insist on transparency in the system, accountability on the part of governments and parliamentarians. They are not going to insist because they feel that we need to be held to task. They know that without transparency and accountability the problems we are in now will be exacerbated in the future.

We have talked about doubling the debt in the last seven or eight years. We can talk about all the reasons for it, but that is not relevant. What do we do about the debt and the deficit in the future?

I hope when we next address the estimates in this House, both Canadians and parliamentarians will have a much better understanding of what this process is all about.

[Translation]

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say, first of all, that in addition to being relevant, the comments by the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst went well beyond what we usually hear in this House.

[English]

I want to congratulate the member for his insightful purview of the debt problem we have in this country and the positive suggestions he made.

The hon. member described in plain, ordinary terms the dangers of pursuing a course of deficit and debt increase. Ultimately it is always the Canadian taxpayer who at the end of the day has to pay the note. Unfortunately for too long governments at all levels have looked

to not just the grandchildren but unborn Canadians to pay the price of these programs we have today.

• (1625)

I am sure the government, the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance would want to look at the proposal to have the Auditor General report more regularly as is done in Britain.

However, when we talk about goals, in the latest budget the Minister of Finance set as a goal the reduction of the deficit to .9 of 1 per cent by the end of this fiscal framework, which is the next five years. That is a goal, but is that a goal the hon. member shares?

Some people were looking at the latest budget in which it is being proposed that government spending be reduced by \$30 billion. That is a serious amount of money over a period of five years and the impact it will have. What does the hon. member say about that goal? Is that not the kind of goal he is proposing?

The other remarks by the hon. member are very relevant to what this government has been pursuing. The hon. member was not partisan in his comments and I do not want to be partisan either. For a period of eight years now since being given its mandate in 1988, I cannot believe every measure proposed by the government to cut expenditures, to cut the deficit, has been opposed by everyone on that side of the House who is not a member of this party.

I took it that he was calling for Canadian men and women and young Canadians to be part of and to understand the process. On every measure proposed, the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the NDP stand in the House to condemn every step. Maybe I am wrong, but how can the hon. member advocate what he rightly points out should be done? We do not seem to be able to live through it and to see it happen.

[Translation]

Mr. Young (Acadie—Bathurst): Mr. Speaker, first of all, on the subject of deficit reduction, I think everyone agrees that we should try and reduce the deficit by every means at our disposal, and the government's objectives certainly have their merits.

However, having been the finance critic for some time now, I can say that, for various reasons, the government's objectives have not been met, and especially its long-term plan for deficit reduction. If I remember correctly,