

The Budget

Liberals wasted money in the past and left us with a debt that affects our country today.

The budget is also good for our economy in that foreign investors will come to Canada and create jobs for our youth. We know that, if we reduce the deficit, young Canadians will not come into this world with that huge debt hanging over their head, as my colleague from Montmorency—Orléans pointed out. I think that is an important measure to ensure a strong economic future for Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member would comment positively or negatively and give her true feelings with regard to the cuts to women's programs in the budget. Is she in favour of that?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Jacques: Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable colleague. I cannot tell you whether I agree or not with those cuts in women's programs. But there is one thing I can tell my Liberal colleague. It is because of your wasteful ways that we have to make those cuts.

[*English*]

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Does the hon. member still agree with the statement the Minister of Finance made back in August 1984 when he stood up in Toronto and said that as a government the Tories in Canada would never cut the deficit by increasing taxes, that the only way they would go about cutting the deficit would be by cutting government programs? Would the hon. member comment on the authenticity of that remark in today's atmosphere.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Jacques: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comment and question.

I simply want to tell him that we have not raised taxes in any way in this budget. We have taken means to cut federal government spending in an effort to reduce the deficit.

Again, my dear colleague, we had no choice in view of the legacy you had left us.

[*English*]

Hon. Gerald S. Merrithew (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank the hon. member for Jonquière for relinquishing his spot in order for me to correct the record on some of the erroneous comments made with regard to measures in the budget affecting veterans.

Certainly I am pleased to enter this debate, because it gives me the opportunity to answer the critics who for purely partisan reasons are trying to create unfounded fear among Canada's veterans. That is simply unfair for them.

• (1710)

Nothing could be further from the truth. This government has always been extremely generous to veterans. These are not just fine words. They are borne out by the facts and by the figures which speak for themselves. Expenditures directly to and on behalf of the veterans of Canada have risen from approximately \$1.2 billion in 1984, when we came to power, to over \$1.5 billion this year. We have made a great number of improvements in veterans' programs, passed enlightened legislation and new benefits, and we are going to continue to do so.

These include a much more responsive pension system, increased compensation to former prisoners of war, benefits for veterans' widows and their families, and the opening up of a very popular program, VIP or Veterans Independence Program, for veterans who served only in Canada.

This government has great respect for our veterans and has been putting that respect into practice every year since we took power in 1984. This year we will be operating with another record budget. Some cut, Madam Speaker!

From that background, let us look at the budget changes which have been preoccupying my friends opposite.

First, I want to talk about the room and board charges, because I think that is an important issue. Let me immediately refute one cruel exaggeration of the effect of these changes which has been unfairly promoted by some. I have heard idle speculation about increases for veterans who lost legs in the war. That is utter rubbish. Nobody in an institution as a result of a war related