

• (1415)

Many of my constituents, community groups, organizations, people right across this great country have said enough is enough. The status quo is unacceptable.

The choice is clear. Section 745 of the Criminal Code must be eliminated.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

REGISTERED RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLANS

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The minister has been refusing for the past few days to rule out the possibility of taxing RRSPs in his next budget. Several analysts have come out against this retroactive tax penalizing middle-income taxpayers. Claude Picher, from *La Presse*, states that it would be very unwise of Ottawa to keep dipping into the taxpayers' pockets. He adds that it would be all the more objectionable since the first ones to be hit would be unorganized private sector employees.

Does the Minister of Finance not realize that, by hiding behind his pre-budget consultations to avoid undertaking not to tax RRSPs, he is the only one to blame for causing fear and worry amongst taxpayers in Quebec and Canada?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, as I told the hon. member, who ask the same question for the third time yesterday, he is the one causing worry. I can only repeat it again, in response to the question he has already asked four times this week.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): All the Minister of Finance has to do, Mr. Speaker, to dispel worry is to say that he will not do it.

Does he not recognize that, by taxing RRSPs, he is changing the rules of the game in mid-game and taking actions which make his government seem to be cheating by completely changing the investment rules in planning—

The Speaker: Order! Perhaps the hon. member could be so good as to choose another word.

Mr. Brien: Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Finance recognize that, by taxing RRSPs, he is changing the rules of the game in mid-game and that taking actions associated with an irresponsible government, by disrupting the financial planning of seniors who depend on the income from their RRSPs to ensure a comfortable retirement for themselves?

Oral Questions

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, it is the hon. member who is irresponsible when he tries to disrupt the pre-budget consultation process and in fact prevent it from taking place. I hope that he will raise these issues at the finance committee when it deals with this matter.

* * *

[English]

SOCIAL REFORM

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, while the government and the Bloc are squabbling about who is going to pay \$47 million for the referendum I point out that the national debt is growing by \$47 million every nine hours. That is putting things in perspective.

The premier of Quebec says he will not play ball with the government's social review. We all know that the separatists have no interest in making a positive contribution to Canada. They just want out.

Will the Prime Minister commit to implementing social reform in spite of obstructive tactics of the separatists.

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada intends to proceed constructively. I am sure that the members of the Bloc Québécois when they see the basis for the social policy reforms will be working with the government to try to make positive changes for Canada.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Human Resources Development misrepresented the Reform position on spending reductions.

It is the government's own deficit target, your own deficit target, that calls for up to \$15 billion in total spending cuts.

Will the finance minister acknowledge that reaching his deficit target of about \$25 billion from a current deficit of about \$40 billion that the government will have to cut up to \$15 billion and is the minister going to cut spending or increase taxes?

• (1420)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, we have made it very clear that government is going to have to cut its spending. We look forward to the consultations with the finance committee in order to determine exactly where Canadians stand.

We are also looking forward to hearing from the Reform Party, which has talked so much about cutting spending, and seeing if they can come up with any constructive suggestions as to where.

An hon. member: It is in the blue book, not the red book.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): On raising taxes or cutting spending?