

respond a little more quickly for the sake of Canadians when we request something.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: When we speak about significant tax cuts—and I wish to touch on certain other tax breaks which I think the Canadian public is entitled to—let there be no doubt that we are simply suggesting not a greater deficit, but less federal spending, because we believe if this government were less wasteful there could be a significant further tax reduction for the Canadian public.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: How many of us still remember how startled we were, speaking about waste, to learn that last year alone the government spent almost \$1 million on cab fares getting around Ottawa?

An hon. Member: Shame!

● (2042)

Mr. Stevens: And yet they tell us they do not know where they can trim the fat.

An hon. Member: Participation.

Mr. Stevens: Before this evening we had an inflation rate of more than 8 per cent and the almost certain prospect of a higher rate in the months ahead. Having heard the minister's speech, realizing that he predicts a 6 per cent rate for next year, I would suggest that we will not attain that rate in that there is already a 4 per cent built-in inflation on the devaluation of the dollar over the next two years. It is the minister's own officials who have said that that will be so.

Frankly, I would suggest that one further tax cut that the minister neglected to make was a substantial reduction in the sales tax that is charged to Canadians from coast to coast.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: Why should the federal government, for example, make more in the sales tax alone on every car sold in this country than the manufacturer, the wholesaler, the retailer, or any provincial government? That fact is true of many other articles as well. The saddest thing of all is the use, as I have said, of the money that the government receives. Speaking about how it spends that money, I wonder how many Canadians were pleased to learn that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) flew on government aircraft a total of 361 times during the last three and a half years, surpassing even the rather staggering record of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang).

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stevens: Let me point out to the Minister of Finance that, surprisingly, in his statement, no meaningful reference was made to small businessmen. Certainly any hope that they

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will have less bureaucratic control evaporated with the statement which we have just heard read into the record. It is disappointing that this sector of our economy which produces most of our jobs continues to be ignored by this government which loves bigness for the sake of bigness. The small businessman is ignored by this government which is more concerned about arranging \$100 million loans for a corporate few than about helping small businessmen who sometimes ask for a few thousand dollars to help create jobs.

I have said that there is some good and some bad in the minister's statement. One of the good things was the dropping of the proposal to tax life insurance proceeds that were going to beneficiaries in Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: Imagine, if that legislation were allowed to pass through this parliament it would have meant that Canada would have been the only country in the world to have found it necessary to tax money that was literally payable to widows and orphans out of life insurance proceeds. Let there be no doubt as to why the government backed down from that taxation proposal. It was because of our insistence on this side that we did not want such retrograde taxation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: Only a month or so ago the leader of my party sent a personal letter to the Minister of Finance asking him to reconsider that tax.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: I could go on, but let us first remember why the government needs these funds which it has shown us tonight are growing further in the form of tax revenues. It needs the funds because it has expanded its spending at such a rate that its deficit in this year alone is estimated to be \$9.2 billion.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Stevens: To put that deficit into perspective, let us remember that \$9.2 billion was almost the size of the total federal budget when the Prime Minister took power in this country. We are told in addition in the minister's statement that not only are we faced with \$9.2 billion this year but that next year we have to budget for an additional \$2 billion in the form of accrued interest on the debt that this government has run up.

When we speak about tax reductions such as the lower sales tax to which I have referred, let there be no doubt—and I underline this—that we believe \$1 billion could be slashed from the government's spending plans with no trouble at all.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: We are not talking about bigger deficits, we are not talking about bigger federal outlays, we are talking about less. In short, we say: restore the income base of