

The Budget

Mr. George S. Rideout (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague opposite. He said that the government did not listen, did not discuss and did not involve Canadians in the process of budget and budget reform in trying to strike a budget that at one time would deal with our financial crisis but at the same time not push the country into recession.

Canadians told us that they did not want us to raise personal income tax, that they did not want us to touch RRSPs and that they did not want us to tax dental plans. They wanted us to make substantial cuts in government so that it would function more efficiently. This government listened and that is what it did.

As I listened to the Reform budget I heard it take on the little guy and make it tough. That budget would impose a direct tax against Atlantic Canada, would attack ACOA and would attack those institutions which make Atlantic Canada function. It would attack seniors and senior women who would see their income taxes rise because of the budget that was put forward by the Reform party.

Did the Reform Party listen to anybody when it put forward its budget?

Mr. Mills (Red Deer): Madam Speaker, what we have done is really listened to the people. People are saying that they are sick and tired of government from the top down. They are saying give them programs that will let them take care of themselves at the local level.

If the hon. member had read the taxpayers' budget he would see that is exactly what it does. It puts in place things like RPSPs which allow people to take care of themselves, not depend on bureaucracy to do it and not depend on government which over 35 years has failed them; failed to guarantee the social programs and failed to provide them with services. That is what the people are saying.

• (1650)

The threat is that \$600 billion and that \$50 billion in interest payment. That is the threat to all the social programs and it is going to hit everyone where we presented a budget which was going to be fair and equal to all and would have provided a solution. It will be too late by the time these people wake up.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I too have to comment on the member's brief speech.

The Reform Party had used the time in advance of consultation on the budget to go around stirring up so called tax revolts and really scaring Canadians by indicating the government is going to do this, the government is going to do that. As the previous member stated very clearly, the government is not

taxing RRSPs or health and dental benefits. The government did not raise personal income taxes. The government did listen.

The government reduced its spending. There are \$7 in spending cuts for every \$1 of revenue increase. The member now, in trying to salvage some face with regard to the ridiculous tax revolt incitement, is trying to rest everything on an excise tax of 1.5 cents per litre.

I have a very simple question so that all Canadians fully understand what that means. Could the member please advise the House how much that means to the ordinary Canadian in terms of going to a gas station to fill up a tank? How much does that tax cost Canadians?

Mr. Mills (Red Deer): Madam Speaker, the answer to that question is \$500 million, but there is a lot more to it than that. There are a lot more areas.

There is that 12.5 per cent to corporations which is going to be off loaded on to people. There are all of the changes when the money is transferred to the provinces to allow them less money, to allow them to increase their delivery of services.

We talk about long term. I am from Alberta and we had a premier in that province, Mr. Getty, who gave a budget very much like this. It was a feel good, be happy, do not ruffle anybody's feathers, try and keep everyone kind of balanced budget.

As far as consultation with the people, I would like to say that in terms of this consultation, the number of town hall meetings and so on that come about in that consultation I would gladly compare with anything that the hon. member does.

Ms. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unlike the last speaker, I think it is a great honour for me to stand today and support the budget. I am very proud of its very bold and visionary approach to fiscal management.

Throughout this budget the Minister of Finance had in effect courageously redefined Canada's system of government while at the same time maintaining the basic principles of fairness and equity.

There are some specific areas of the budget that I would like to address today, especially as they impact on British Columbians and on my constituents.

I would like to stress that this budget has fulfilled all the promises made by our government. It was tough but it was fair. This budget has ensured that the financial burdens faced by all Canadians will be distributed in an equitable manner. It started by cleaning house, by setting an example of frugality and fiscal prudence from the top.