

Government Orders

Prince Edward Island is not a nation. British Columbia is not a nation. They are great places in the world, with generous people. I spent my vacation in Prince Edward Island and it is a wonderful part of the country, but it is not a nation. Again, it is a wonderful part of the country. Being a nation involves having a distinct language, a distinct legal system, government control, a collective will to live together. These elements make us a nation under international law.

Canada is indeed a great country, and I am able to recognize this. But what I said about Canadian federalism is that, although Canada is a great country, although I have many friends on the other side of this House, including the parliamentary secretary, Canada as it now exists cannot allow two nations to achieve self-realization. That is why, in the next century—and saying this does not show contempt, secessionist tendencies or obtuseness—Canada must be redesigned so that both nations can enjoy a relationship as political equals and economic partners.

When my hon. colleague tells me that his niece, of whom he is no doubt very proud, speaks three languages, it is something that must be applauded. However, the hon. member is confusing the collective dimension with the individual dimension.

I wish that all members of this House were multilingual. Three mornings a week, I get up at seven in the morning to learn English so I can discuss with my hon. colleagues. But all this does not change anything to the fact that Quebec is a nation and must have all the powers, its own country and its own government.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, normally, when I rise in this House to participate in a debate on a bill, I can say that it is with great pleasure that I speak to the bill before us.

[English]

This is not a pleasant budget on which to be speaking. For many of us it is a very painful budget. For many Canadians it is a very painful budget. For us as Liberals it presents some decisions we would rather not have to be making.

Liberals tend to want to be builders and creators, not to be pulling back on progress that has been made and programs that have been established. Following the second world war we were able to invest in housing, invest in transportation, invest in the education of our returning war veterans and yet pay off the war debt within five years. That was in the time of an expanding economy both domestically and internationally.

• (1035)

Liberals have been proud to create a package of social programs that has offered Canadians a standard of living and a quality of living second to none. We have been proud to introduce security for workers who lose their jobs. We have been proud to introduce security for Canadians who because of

disability and many other reasons are unable to support themselves. We have been proud to share responsibility for our fellow citizens in need.

It was a Liberal government that was proud to set as a national target approximately two decades ago the elimination of poverty among the elderly. We have achieved that.

However, these are different times. We now have to look at how we can use the very limited resources of the nation and of our taxpayers to continue the quality of life the nation has enjoyed and to continue progress into the future. We also have to face some very hard facts and that is what the budget bill does.

[Translation]

We must realize that 40 per cent of our national debt is held by foreign countries and that, when we pay interest on the debt every year, 40 per cent or \$16 billion are paid out to foreign lenders. That is money that does not get back into our national economy; it does not work for us to improve our economic situation, here, in Canada. This money is paid outside the country and, therefore, not subject to Canadian income taxes. This is a double loss to our economy.

[English]

We have to face the fact that we are now paying one-third of every dollar we collect from Canadians and spend on government programs and services just to pay the interest on the debt. That proportion is rising year by year. If we continue to allow that to happen we will have less and less to do the things we want to do for the country and for Canadians.

I have sat in this House since 1988 and have heard repeated promises of reducing the debt and deficit and that we have to go through this pain to get to a certain objective. However, this is the first time since I have sat in this House that there has been an actual and substantial reduction in the deficit.

With the budget we are projecting the fulfilment of our 1993 campaign commitment to Canadians to cut the deficit by half in proportion to the GNP by 1997.

I have said this is a painful budget. One does not cut one's spending without removing from many Canadians certain programs, services and benefits we have enjoyed as a nation. We have done the budget in full consultation with Canadians. The Minister of Finance has met with Canadians across the country. We as members of Parliament have met with our constituents on what should be in the budget and asked for their advice and counsel in the difficult decisions we had to make.

In Ottawa West I was very fortunate to have several hundred people come together and assist me in advising the finance minister as to what we felt were the important issues to be taken into consideration in coming up with the budget. The people of Ottawa West told me they were concerned about the debt and deficit. They are concerned about the continuing deterioration