

*Government Orders*

It is quite clear that Canadians expect us to come up with a more efficient, more effective, leaner but not meaner government in this country. To cut, slash and burn at a more hectic pace, which is what is being suggested by the Reform Party, would produce a much meaner government and a much meaner society which is something I reject as a Canadian and Canadians generally reject.

We had very good evidence of that on October 25, 1993. Canadians were given a clear choice between a gradual, common sense, determined approach to reducing the deficit and debt in this country as outlined in the Liberal red book, and a much more dramatic and draconian approach to the deficit and debt problems put forth by the Reform Party. Canadians spoke very clearly in October 1993 about what choice they preferred. Indeed, they have endorsed that choice again with the reaction we have seen to the budget in the weeks since it was brought down.

Why is that? In my view it is because Canadians understand that if private sector businesses are facing the situation where they must downsize and become more efficient and effective, then so too must governments. It is not incumbent on any government more than the federal government to show by example that this must be done.

I heard repeatedly from my constituents the phrase to just share the pain equally and all Canadians will support it. Just make sure we are spreading it out equally. That is exactly what my constituents have told me. Urban constituents, rural constituents, people in business and in farming, all of whom I represent, have told me they are content with the budget and they think we are on the right track.

One of the best indicators of the budget being very fair and balanced is the fact that we are now up to eight provinces out of 10 that have claimed to have been the hardest hit by this budget. That is one of the clearest signs that the budget is fair and is trying to treat all provinces as equally as possible.

Critics from the left are saying the budget was much too tough. Critics from the right are saying that the budget was not tough enough. Perhaps the surest way we Liberals have of knowing we have reached the right, common sense, balanced decision is just to acknowledge the fact that at the same time on the same decision on this budget we were getting criticism from the right that it was not tough enough and from the left that it was much too tough.

**Some hon. members:** We must be right.

**Mr. O'Brien:** That is right. As my colleague says, that must obviously give us some evidence that we must be right. Canadians certainly feel that we have reached a balanced position in the budget.

We have met our targets. For the first time in over 10 years a finance minister has announced deficit targets and has actually held and met those targets. He has exceeded those targets. In just a year and a half this minister has produced two budgets both of which have cut spending and have begun the important government restructuring which must take place as we move toward the 21st century.

In the next three years over \$29 billion in savings will be realized. I remind members that there are \$7 in cuts for every \$1 in revenue in this budget. It is quite clear to Canadians that this budget turns the corner. It puts us on a national diet, if you will. It indicates the way in which we must start to seriously attack this deficit problem with the view to totally eliminating it when that is possible.

• (1210)

The minister's two year rolling target is a sensible determined way to go about this. No, it is not endorsed by the Reform Party, which wants to be much more slash and burn in its approach, but then again Canadians do not generally endorse that view.

The reaction I have had in my riding to this budget has been quite favourable. My constituents are pleased. Canadians from coast to coast to coast have indicated repeatedly that they are pleased. No, not with every single decision in the budget but they are pleased in general that the minister and the government are on the right track.

In my riding I have formed an agricultural advisory committee. The previous speaker from the Reform Party pretty much solely addressed large parts of his comments to agriculture. The farmers I represent have made it clear that yes, they took a hit, but they acknowledge that business subsidies were cut by 60 per cent. The farmers I represent feel that the finance minister got it about right.

It would seem that except for Bob Rae who has an election coming up pretty soon which he would like to duck and some of his colleagues in the NDP—

**Mr. Calder:** Bob who?

**Mr. O'Brien:** Yes, it will soon be Bob who? Except for those people on the left and the Reform Party—I prefer to call it the excessive conservative party—except for those two parties on the extremes in this country, most Canadians have reacted favourably to the budget. That is the reality. That is the fact. I know it is not popular to members on the other side but then again, that is life.

**Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I listened with interest as the member opposite was going through some Olympian hurdles and patting himself on the back for the marvellous job they did.