

Supply

of the Bloc. I think it is time he became accountable to this House, to the people in his constituency and to the people across the country because he is not being accountable.

This member has said that spending on social programs has not played a part and has not been the reason that we have a deficit in this country. I would like him to answer some very direct questions.

Total federal spending was about \$163 billion last year. About \$40 billion of that was interest payments on the debt. You are not going to make interest payments on the debt? About \$80 billion was in the area of social program spending. About \$43 billion was for all other government spending, including the cost of government, defence, Indian affairs and so.

Reform put out a detailed plan to cut \$10 billion from that \$43 billion and presented it to the finance minister and to the finance committee. I never heard members of the Bloc saying that they would cut more from that area. They complained they would not make the cuts that Reform has proposed to make out of that area. That means the Bloc is prepared to cut more out of this \$80 billion in social program spending because there is no other place to make the cuts. That is reality.

I would like this member to start talking about reality. I want to ask him directly how he would propose to balance the budget using some fact without making cuts in the area of social program spending. I would like him to answer this in a way that will be believable to the people in his constituency and across the country.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): You have barely 30 seconds left.

Mr. Brien: I will be quick, Madam Speaker, and will ask my colleague to reread my speech, which he probably did not understand, because it was in French. Let him reread its translation.

I can see why someone who can only envision resolving the public finances issue through social spending cuts would be frustrated to see other people find other ways of resolving it. They know very well how hard a time they are having with it. Their ideas are not being accepted in Quebec and that probably frustrates them all the more.

It would be my pleasure to send him a copy of the finance committee's report, which contains the Bloc Quebecois' proposed solution to the public finances problem. I will tell him once again that it was certainly not the most needy who got us into our current debt situation. That is certainly not the case. Look at the past to see the reasons for the current debt level.

[*English*]

Hon. Roger Simmons (Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Madam Speaker—

• (1345)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry to interrupt. May I ask the hon. whether you are taking 20 minutes or splitting your time?

Mr. Simmons: The former. I intend to take most of the time allotted because it is an issue raised by my good friend from Capilano—Howe Sound, a gentleman who brings great credentials to the House and to the debate. However, he ought to use more of those credentials in formulating his motion but I will come to that a little later because the effort allowing us to debate this issue is applauded. For that I applaud my friend from Capilano—Howe Sound.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the debate because the motion does have its merits. I am confident that the merits of the motion will be addressed in the budget which is upcoming.

Unfortunately, however, I have to say to him that the motion is also a bit tainted in several areas by a bit of simplistic thinking. I would have expected something different from him. It is tainted by a search for panaceas that if we do this and this, all of our problems will go away. I do not think he believes that.

Let me emphasize that the government knows full well that Canadians believe taxes are already too high. We agree with them on that. We would get a certain impression if we saw some people trying to start a tax revolt or in Mackenzie King's famous statement: "There go my troops. I must rush out to lead them". I am not sure which it is, whether they want to start the revolt, join the revolt or what. It is either naive or treacherous as the case may be but you decide, Madam Speaker.

Our priority objectives as a government are to stimulate economic growth while putting in place some real fiscal discipline. It is this double barrelled thrust that will ultimately allow us to reduce taxes in the years to come.

Let us remember that the tax and deficit relationship is a two way street. Every dollar of deficit borrowing we accept today will lead to higher taxes tomorrow. Every dollar we can trim from the deficit is a step on the road to keeping the tax burden down.

That is why the government's 1994 budget was in many ways a tax reform and a tax reduction budget. It included measures to eliminate loopholes and to increase tax system fairness and equity. It also committed to direct action to bring down unemployment insurance premiums, a payroll tax that acts as a real barrier to new job creation.

It was also a tax reduction budget because of the firm commitment made by the Minister of Finance to cut the deficit to 3 per cent of the economy in three years. Again, let me make this central point. Fiscal discipline is the key to long term tax