

The Budget—Mr. Rodriguez

Mr. Hopkins: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member accused me of going on for too long, but I would point out to him that the indecency of his own colleagues speaking from their seats, shouting and putting comments on the record, was not going to go unnoticed. Perhaps if he had some rapport on his side of the House my speech would not have taken so long.

I say to the Hon. Member for Ottawa West (Mr. Daubney) that plans were in fact under way to upgrade the Algonquin Radio Observatory, and he knows that. He knows that this proposal was before Treasury Board. But the Government was not going to cancel one and do the other. Was the Government going to cancel its own Canadian technology and go offshore besides? The Hon. Member knows very well that we can buy into another telescope or take an interest in another telescope, but that does not mean we have to destroy our own technology at home in order to do so.

If the Hon. Member wanted to be square on what he said, he would have said that the Government made a choice. It made a choice to cancel the Algonquin Radio Observatory to go offshore. That is what the Minister told us. If the Hon. Member refutes that, he is refuting his own Minister. Here we are destroying our own technology at home, but we are quite willing to put our bucks into a foreign country, have a share in something on foreign land, yet at the same time the Government talks about mothballing an observatory here at home which is in an area which needs the employment and does business with many businesses throughout the area and is known world-wide for its excellence. But the Hon. Members' Government not only refused to upgrade the observatory but decided it was going to close it down and go offshore and say no to Canadian-born technology.

Mr. Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I listen very carefully to the speech of my colleague, the Hon. Member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke (Mr. Hopkins). Even though I am finance critic, I have not had the opportunity to look into all aspects of the Budget, so I would like the Hon. Member to comment on the percentage of increase in defence spending. I understand that the Tories promised during the election campaign to have a real increase of 6 per cent, and the Hon. Member gave us a figure of an increase of only 2.75 per cent in the second Budget, .2 per cent in 1985-86, and zero in 1987-88. Can the Hon. Member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke tell us how it would affect our defence? Could he give us a concrete example of how such a decision by the Tory Government, in contradiction of its promises, will affect people in the Hon. Member's riding or in any other place in Canada?

Mr. Hopkins: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for his question. Perhaps it will be more realistic if we did not only talk in percentages. I said that in the first year the Government was in power, it had negative growth in real defence spending in its Budget. In the second year, it went up by 2.75 per cent, but this year it may well again have negative growth in the defence budget. So that will be deducted from the 2.75 per cent in the second year. It is a pretty dismal showing.

• (1720)

With respect to the long-term and, indeed, the short-term effects that this will have on the defence community of Canada, the Armed Forces, if we will be increasing the reserves, as the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Beatty) says we will be doing, then why did he say it would be done over a period of 15 years? It is because there will not be enough money to do it beforehand. Why is the Government putting off the purchase of submarines for such a long time? Because it does not have the money to purchase them. Why are military bases in the country going without maintenance funds for buildings and the simple things they need? It is because there is no money to do the job. This means that we will have continued deterioration where there is no money to upgrade military bases across Canada and those outside Canada. It will cost more in the long run to fix up these buildings and carry out the maintenance work that needs to be done.

In terms of the Budget I spoke only about personnel. The Government promised that it would greatly increase the personnel of the Armed Forces. The present numbers differ little from the number of three years ago when the Conservatives came to power. That is another promise that has not been kept.

In answer to the Hon. Member's question, it simply means that everything will be put off for down the road. I hope that we do not have any wars or rumours of wars taking place before then, because if there are it will involve an awfully fast step-up job to get anything done.

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I want to add my two cents' worth to the debate on the Budget of February 18.

One thing I can recall vividly is the feeling in the country after Pierre Elliott Trudeau ascended to the Prime Ministership of Canada in 1968. One of the hallmarks of his first four years in office was to do with how divided the country was and the fact that the regions of the country were split. He destroyed the fabric which held Canada together. In looking at the election results of the 1974 election we see that the representation in the House of Commons reflected that division. It reflected the disunity in the country. For example, by and large, western Canadians supported the Conservative Party. Every Member of Parliament Alberta sent back was a Conservative Member of Parliament. Ontario was split. Quebec sent back a preponderance of Liberals. The Atlantic region was split. There was an accepted belief that the Liberals had split Canada. They did not have a consensus. They did not reflect equal representation. Indeed, between 1980 and 1984 the Liberals were shut out of western Canada, not only federally but oftentimes provincially. At that time one could not give a Liberal away. They had split the country.

Then, in 1984, the present Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) returned here with 211 seats. Everyone said: "Look at that. This is a broadly representative Government. We now have