

successful, why has the government waited so long after the promise it made during the 1984 election campaign?

Mr. Vincent: Mr. Speaker, I emphasized during my speech that this should not be a partisan debate. The question raised by my colleague is somewhat partisan. I will tell him again what I said earlier.

I said that when we were elected in 1984, the national debt stood at \$200 billion. I said that if the member would look at the annual deficit under the Conservative government since 1984, the annual deficit for each year, and if the member would also look at the amount of interest to be paid on the debt that my hon. colleague created, since he was a member of the cabinet before 1984, if he would look at the interests on that debt, he would realize that, give or take \$10 billion over an amount of \$200 billion, which represents 5 per cent, it is exactly the same thing. This means that we have trouble paying the interest on the debt that we inherited. This is no secret; it is true and it is public knowledge. Yes, it is hard for us.

If we had not taken control of the affairs of the state and if we had not made all these cuts within the government and through tax increases, you can imagine what the debt would be right now. We would not even be able to write it on an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet, because there would be too many zeros. This is what I mean when I talk about sound management and finance control. Indeed, there is still a lot to be done, but a lot has also been done compared to what went on before 1984.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for the parliamentary secretary.

My first one is this: If it was such a good idea to table this bill, why didn't the government do this during the first year it was in power? Why wait until now?

My second question: The draft bill tabled before the finance committee contained a proposal for a 3 per cent annual increase in government spending. The government has changed the figures and proposes an annual increase of more than 3 per cent for every year covered by this bill. Why did the government raise these figures? Because it is unable to control spending? Why did the government do this?

Government Orders

Mr. Vincent: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's first question was why the government did not table this bill in the first year after it was elected. I would like to point out to the hon. member that we live in a country and a society that are developing very fast. Every day legislation is amended and new legislation is tabled before the House.

It is that philosophy that is also reflected in the budget. It is a philosophy that relates to the economic, financial and fiscal aspects of our country. The hon. member seems to be saying the bill is a good one. If it is so good, what difference does it make when he votes for it, as long as he does? I have no problem with that. Let him admit that this government drafts legislation that is good for the country, not because it is good for the Progressive Conservative Party or the Liberal Party or the NDP, because that is not the purpose of our debate this morning. This is not an issue that should be dealt with in a partisan manner. This is a matter of substance that should be addressed with arguments on substance, not petty partisan arguments.

His second question concerned the 3 per cent increase in expenditures. I may point out to the hon. member that there are 48 different ways to calculate government spending. What the bill proposes is different from what was provided in the draft bill, but conversely, the various expenditures included in the draft bill have been removed. We cannot compare apples and oranges, because it just will not work. That is more or less what the hon. member's question amounts to. He asked me to compare two things that are not quite the same. Since a number of spending categories were added later on, they cannot be calculated the same way.

I think the hon. member, who is usually quite brilliant, will understand this position.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a very short comment. I know the member would want to make sure that Canadians had a full understanding of the government's actions during the period of 1984 to 1992.

• (1140)

This deathbed conversion to expenditure control is really not going to wash. He failed in his address to mention that from 1984 until today the Conservative government has hit the people of Canada with over 32 tax increases, which amounted to just under \$60 billion in