

Government Orders

saw in the budget that the government was prepared to do likewise.

In the past, governments have always favoured tax increases or taxing target groups, the aim being not to hit everyone at the same time. The preferred approach seems to be: divide and conquer. With the result that those who are penalized are frustrated with those who are not and vice versa the following year, except that we remember only of those years when we are personally affected.

Such a policy may be profitable for a government in want of a new mandate, but this is not the kind of policy which promotes solidarity among fellow citizens or confidence in their elected representatives, if they think that taxation policies are often arbitrary and selective if need be.

The Canadian people would agree to make an effort if the government was demonstrating by its actions the firm will to tackle its pattern of expenditures instead of cutting a little in this or that item.

The Liberal government could have shown a great deal of openness and transparency to restore the confidence of taxpayers by accepting that the committee requested by the Official Opposition on many occasions be set up to review all government programs as well as their budgets.

I think it was easier for the government to say that we already have the Standing Committee on Public Accounts than to accept to be faced with questions from the public through the Official Opposition.

The Minister of Finance himself said in his budget speech that it was not enough to cut here and there, that fundamental changes were required. Does this mean that the government intends to do as much to reduce its own spending as it is asking from the taxpayers?

On the subject of joint efforts to reduce the deficit, would the taxpayers not find that the thing to do on the part of the government, when they are facing a drain of over \$14 billion in taxes over the next three years, would be to cut government spending further instead of announcing that it will increase by another \$4.4 billion during the same period?

Taxpayers would be proud of their government if it took the initiative of streamlining government structure not from the bottom up, but the other way around and reviewed its programs, because only 12 per cent of government programs are actually assessed and, even then, not always with regard to performance but only to ascertain that funds are well administered, that is to say that they are going to the right place. Savings of only a few percentage points on a budget of \$123 billion—without taking interest into account of course—resulting from a review of operating budgets and the rationale of certain programs, would

put a very substantial amount back in the public purse, and the taxpayers would appreciate that.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the people of Canada as well as those of Quebec have the right to require from their government more transparency in its budget, more fairness, more self-assessment and that its make as much of a sacrifice as it asks from the taxpayers.

When that has been achieved, the vast majority of Canadians will trust their government more and certainly accept to make all necessary efforts to fight the deficit.

• (1640)

[English]

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River): Mr. Speaker, as I stand before this House to deliver my maiden speech I want to say how honoured and proud I am to be part of this new Liberal government in this 35th Parliament.

I firmly believe our Minister of Finance has delivered a budget which lives up to our campaign promises in the red book. This budget will bring back a renewed sense of confidence and hope to the people we serve.

I come to this House as a farmer from a rural constituency on the prairies. My constituency is Dauphin—Swan River. I would like to take a few moments to tell hon. members in this House about it.

Mine is a rural constituency in the northwest region of Manitoba. It is very large geographically. The major industry is agriculture with all of the infrastructure and necessary support services that go along with that. In addition we have forestry, commercial fishing and tourism.

Within the boundaries of Dauphin—Swan River are two major parks, one federal and one provincial. Our agricultural base is well diversified. Our land base is one of the most fertile and productive in western Canada.

Even more diversified than our economy are our people who derive from a broad and diverse cultural and ethnic base, including 13 native reserves. It is this very diverse group of people who on October 25 placed their confidence in me to represent their interests in this place. I thank them for this marvellous opportunity to serve. I assure them I will do everything in my power to live up to their expectations.

Of course the good people of Dauphin—Swan River did not just vote for me. They also voted for a party and a leader who had a plan. It is a plan to create economic growth and put Canadians back to work, a plan to stabilize the agri-food industry with a national food security policy, a plan to establish a new partnership with aboriginal peoples, a plan to preserve and enhance our social safety net, a plan to lead Canadians into the 21st century with a renewed sense of confidence, optimism and hope.