

The Budget

should take that line of attack. I think he should look at the situation as it is right now and at the figures as they are. As far as that goes, I have no problem with the accounting methods used by the Government of Canada to make our figures crystal clear. The hon. member knows perfectly well that our accounting methods are pretty good, because our figures are not only for domestic consumption. They are also scrutinized by international organisation, so they have to comply with generally recognized accounting principles, and the hon. member admits as much. I can tell from the expression on his face.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, since debate has resumed, I would remind my friend from Trois-Rivières who is the parliamentary secretary—I do not want to take all my time talking about it—that he need only refer to the public accounts for 1991. On Page 2.23, the Auditor General, Denis Desautels, not I, wrote: “These reservations deal with what I believe is improper accounting for: (1) the effect of short-term wage restraint on employee pensions; (2) a reduction in the value of the investment in Petro-Canada; and (3) income tax revenue collected on behalf of provinces”. He may be new but he is an excellent accountant.

He had three serious reservations that together amount to \$2 billion which the government said it had saved, when all the accountants who testified before the public accounts committee and the Canadian Association of Accountants told us that is not proper bookkeeping. The parliamentary secretary who is close to the minister and on top of the issues should know that a serious reservation has been expressed about the public accounts and it should be heeded. All I asked him is this: Will he comply, will he listen to what the experts told us Canadians and will they change their methods so that we can read those accounts with some understanding and satisfaction that we are being told the whole truth and that the dice are not loaded?

That being said, I go on to the budget. By the way, I must say that this morning the estimates for the coming year were tabled and they contain everything the government intends to do in terms of programs. If people are interested, they can read 80 booklets on what is happening in each department and agency. These clearly ex-

plain, I think, what the government intends to spend for the year that begins April 1, 1992 and ends March 31, 1993.

[*English*]

The Tories have presented a budget that is cosmetic. It attempts to paint a rosy picture without addressing the fundamentals. It gives a little bit to a lot of people. It is like giving a mouthful of food to someone who is very hungry or starving. It provides fleeting relief but it does nothing to address the agony that person is having. We are having a terrible time in this country with regard to the economy and with regard to the confidence of the Canadian people in the future.

I suppose we should be happy. At the very least the Tories have admitted current weaknesses in the economy. I think they are getting the message from Canadians now that indeed we are having some problems. For all their admissions, they have offered little hope for those who have no jobs. These are the 1.4 million Canadians who are currently unemployed. There is nothing to help those on welfare. These are Canadians who would love to escape the cycle of poverty. There is nothing to stimulate the economy which needs a kick-start and should have been included in this budget statement.

The day before yesterday the finance minister based his budget on shaky assumptions. For example, he said that 500,000 jobs will magically be created by the large and small companies of Canada. These are the same companies that had their confidence shaken to the core by the destructive policies of this same government. It is a government which has not even provided the tools to help them compete in an atmosphere of free trade and intense global competition.

Those in government clear their throats with globalization and competitiveness, yet they have done nothing in the budget tabled a couple of days ago or in the estimates tabled today to give Canadians confidence that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Another assumption made by the Minister of Finance is that Canadians will take the money from the marginal tax break they will receive in seven months from the reduction of the surtax. We calculate that that is about an average of \$20 per Canadian. This is supposed to inspire them to go on a spending spree and get the