

The Budget

There is some inconsistency. We have to really give a fair assessment of what this budget does. The budget does address the commitments made in the red book. I do not think it is fair for the hon. member for Mercier to somehow tell the Canadian people that it does not.

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, the inconsistencies are not on my side. When the government was elected it had the choice as to whether or not to raise UI premiums. The finance minister yesterday said that the raising of UI premiums is bad for small enterprises and for jobs. However, the government raised them from \$3 in December to \$3.07 in January 1994 for small businesses.

If the hon. member does not know it, he should look at the facts. The inconsistency is to say that it is bad for enterprise, taking \$800 million from the economy and then a year after going back to \$3.

The government was inconsistent by saying it was not good and then doing it. I am glad that it has done it. For me it was a pleasure to read that it is not good because it has done it.

• (1805)

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the remarks of the member.

What came to my mind is a quotation from Jesse Jackson, the American political activist, who stated that it was not the poor that attended the banquet of the 1970s and 1980s when we saw deficit financing by the Liberal and Conservative governments that created the inflation and tremendous increase in wealth and real estate, stocks and bonds, the over-indulgence to leverage buyouts, the huge waste of public money and private corporate money. It was not the poor that attended the banquet, but it is the poor that gets stuck with the bill.

Does the hon. member agree with Jesse Jackson's analysis and also agree that what this government is doing is presenting the poor with the bill even though the poor were not responsible for creating the deficit and the financial mess we are in.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comment. I think he could draw his own conclusions from that document.

The fact is that there are people right now who do not have access to secure jobs. I mentioned in particular young people, women, many who live in remote regions, and others as well. In Quebec, more than 4,000 bright young engineers are unemployed. These people can only rely on the social safety net which the government wants to make even smaller, on top of making them pay for the inconsistencies of successive governments.

[English]

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Mercier for her speech.

She made reference in the last sentence to Quebec sovereignty. Earlier this afternoon the first speaker for the Bloc spoke of Canadians and Quebecers. In referring to Canadians and Quebecers and to Quebec sovereignty, are the members of the Bloc Quebecois Party referring to Quebec separation from Canada?

[Translation]

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that Bloc Quebecois members were elected on a platform that promotes Quebec's sovereignty. However, they are not in Ottawa to achieve that but, rather, to protect Quebec's interests. Quebecers respect and appreciate Canada, but during all these years of attempting to make reforms which would have given appropriate status to our province, the notion that enough is enough gradually grew stronger.

Instead of wasting time and let intolerance grow, for the very reason that there is so much poverty and unemployment, let us put all our energy into finding a solution to those problems. To that end, Quebec must assume all powers and develop the best possible relations with Canada. This is what I was referring to.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. The point about sovereignty has been raised.

On a financial issue in that regard, the member concluded that as a result of the inconsistencies therefore the answer must be that a sovereign Quebec will be the solution.

I wonder if the member would care to advise the House how much of the \$500 billion national debt Quebec is prepared to assume and how it intends to finance that and survive as a separate country.

The Deputy Speaker: Before the hon. member for Mercier responds, with the Speaker having just left, I must remind members to please put their comments to the Chair. He gets quite upset if you do not do that.

• (1810)

[Translation]

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, you will understand, and so will the hon. member, that the Bloc does not have a mandate to negotiate what will be a normal settlement under the circumstances. Assets, liabilities and the repayment of the debt will have to be examined. Some people in Quebec have already looked at this and I imagine that others are doing the same in Canada.