

*The Budget*

Could he please address those two points?

**Mr. Bélair:** On the first point, the member made it a point to answer his own question. I guess there is no point in me trying to repeat everything he has just said.

**Mr. Turner (Halton—Peel):** Do you agree?

**Mr. Bélair:** Certainly. On the national debt, it seems that the Tories do not want to accept the fact that since 1984 this debt has doubled under their management. All the time they say it is compound interest on the debt that was left to them by the previous government. I totally disagree with that. As I said in my speech, the government has increased taxes on 33 occasions. Personal income tax has increased by 22 per cent, and yet the deficit keeps going up all the time. This is despite some very good years economically, when there was less unemployment and more people paying taxes. The deficit has always been around \$29 or \$30 billion.

This is why my party and I really wonder what the government was doing during those golden years. I do agree today that it is difficult to reduce the deficit because of the recession. But it is a recession they have created themselves because of high interest rates and the high Canadian dollar.

**Mr. Hughes:** We created the recession in Europe too and all around the world.

**Mr. Bélair:** Maybe there are some clauses in the free trade agreement that we have not seen and that some members opposite have not seen either—the ones that say the Canadian dollar should remain high for a certain amount of time.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marie Gibeau (Bourassa):** Mr. Speaker, last week's break gave members of the House a chance to keep in touch with what was going on in our ridings. Personally I welcomed this opportunity to go and meet with some of my constituents in Montreal North and talk about their present concerns. The latest budget was mentioned a number of times and I was pleased to see that many aspects of our proposal had met with their

approval. No wonder, considering how carefully this government's budget was prepared.

Some of our constituents are under the impression that all decisions are made behind closed doors by a chosen few and finally disclosed to the population on the night the budget is tabled. Having been involved in preparing two budgets, I can assure my fellow citizens that their comments to me and to their members did not fall on deaf ears. No wonder then that taxpayers can often recognize their suggestions in budgets tabled by governments.

Obviously not all of them can be included, because the realities government has to deal with and the balancing act it has to do to ensure that the available resources are commensurate with the needs expressed. All that makes it impossible to satisfy everybody. But when a government such as this one sets out to harmonize the prosperity of future generations with the quality of life for the present generation, choices have to be made.

Since the Conservatives have been in power, budgets reflect comments made to members by their constituents. The Quebec caucus, which set up a budget committee, submitted an impressive list of recommendations to the Minister of Finance. Of course members and constituents were delighted when they saw that the latest federal budget reflected those recommendations.

Ever since I was elected, my constituents have told me that economic problems require a realistic and durable response, not hasty, band-aid solutions. People want the assurance that our social programs will meet their needs. They want new reasons to have confidence in the future. But, above all, they want the federal government to reduce public spending as well as the deficit. Easier said than done. A government bureaucracy cannot turn on a dime. Tradition, history and precedent have helped develop a vast number of procedures and working methods, levels of management and regulations. In families, business and government, traditions accumulate over the years and often tend to smother creative thinking.