

Oral Questions

Which is the right approach? My constituents are in the process of returning a detailed survey on economic alternatives and early results are unequivocally clear. Citizens of Halton—Peel are stressing that deficit reduction should be Ottawa's number one priority, and that good jobs which last are not likely to be created until we get our House in order.

Further, my constituents are overwhelmingly in support of some mechanism to ensure Canada has a balanced budget and not more deficit spending.

In other words, the people I represent are saying clearly and loudly, no to the Liberal strategy of spend, spend, spend, and tax, tax, tax, and yes to the vision of the Minister of Finance of less government, lower taxes, and a less indebted future.

back away from principles such as freedom of expression, especially not in the face of such threats.

We have continued to make representations in this case. In November, following the announcement of an increase in the reward for his murder, we raised his case with the Iranians once again. We maintain a very active dialogue with Iran on human rights to encourage a more moderate approach.

Last week we co-sponsored a resolution at the General Assembly expressing our concern on human rights violations in Iran. At each opportunity that is given to us, the Secretary of State for External Affairs or myself, raise this matter vigorously and effectively, we think, on behalf of all members of the House of Commons.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): I have a supplementary for the Prime Minister.

All political formations represented in the German Parliament have passed a resolution in which they agree to hold the government of Iran accountable for any attempt on Mr. Rushdie's life or that of any of the 12 000 people who have helped publish or distribute his book. Were something to happen to any of them, the German government would impose very severe economic sanctions against Iran.

• (1420)

I would like to ask the Prime Minister if the Canadian Parliament would be willing to adopt such a resolution as soon as possible.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, this resolution passed in Germany was initiated by members of Parliament as opposed to the German government.

However, we, as Canadians, fully support several international actions by the United Nations and other international groups and multilateral organizations. It is always possible for members of the Canadian Parliament to initiate the same kind of thing.

[English]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Prime Minister.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

SALMAN RUSHDIE

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

This morning I had the occasion to meet Salman Rushdie, an author who is under death sentence because he wrote a book that was not liked by the Government of Iran.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister if this government intends to raise this matter at the UN Commission on Human Rights and try to gather some support among countries of the G-7 and the Commonwealth so that this completely unfair situation and threat to freedom of writing around the world be stopped immediately.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for what is a very important question.

At the time of the imposition of the penalty against Mr. Rushdie, Canada condemned it as a direct challenge to freedom of expression. I indicated publicly at the time, on behalf of the government and on behalf of all members of the House, that Canada cannot and will not