

*Government Orders*

hon. member for Provencher, Labour dispute; the hon. member for Winnipeg North, Tobacco.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Abitibi.

• (1630)

**Mr. Bernard Deshaies (Abitibi):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity today to voice a different opinion on the last budget and on the impact it will have and not have on people in Canada in general and in my riding in particular.

The Canadian budget exercise is something extremely serious and we cannot speak about it lightly. It very often means life or death for projects or economic activities on which individuals depend. For example, in my riding mining is very important and generates income for the whole country.

Some people have criticized the budget because it does not do enough to create jobs for Canadians. Others have criticized it as well because it does not deal strongly enough with the national debt. Very often, deluged by figures, Mr. and Mrs. Average Citizen, do not know who to believe and why they should trust anyone. A budget should inspire confidence.

Although the budget is an accounting tool which allows the government to evaluate its financial capabilities for the coming year, it is often perceived by Canadians more as a means of taking more money out of their pockets than a tool for improvement and progress.

With an accumulated debt of over \$500 billion, and consistent deficits, year after year, how can Quebecers and Canadians have any confidence in their government? What should we do so that this exercise, which is so important to the country's economy, does not always, or nearly always, end up being a source of frustration but rather a tool of choice to fire up the country, if not bring it back to life?

Canada's economic situation does not allow the finance minister to give presents to taxpayers, they understand that, but to give the budget a positive image does not necessarily require presents.

Following the last budget, I heard many Canadians say on open-line shows how disappointed they were with it. I am not going to say whether they were right or wrong. Obviously, the Minister of Finance cannot please everyone, but he must try to correct inequities.

When listening to these people on the radio, one realizes that the budget could have a much more positive image if people could see in this accounting exercise the promise of some changes for themselves and people around them.

During one of these open-line shows, a lady gave her opinion of the budget saying that even though she was personally affected by it, she agreed to pay more taxes, as a retired senior, to improve the country's financial situation. But she also said

that, with a deficit still that big, and despite her willingness to pay more taxes, it might be an exercise in futility.

Another caller, who introduced himself as a federal civil servant, said that he was also obliged to do his share for the country, without being asked to, by accepting a further wage freeze, but added that he would have hoped that major companies would also have done their bit.

I only gave the example of two citizens in the Hull-Ottawa area who, even though they were disappointed, accepted to support the last budget, knowing probably that their efforts would help control the deficit.

I am certain that there are other members in this House who could give as many if not more examples of Quebecers and Canadians who agreed, willy-nilly, to support the fight against the deficit. Faced with such examples of courage among our fellow citizens, I wonder if the government is really trying as hard as they are to control the deficit.

How are Mr. and Mrs. Joe Public to believe that the government is truly making an effort to curb the deficit when year after year, the Auditor General of Canada tables a report rife with examples of waste and mismanagement and when no serious attempt seems to be made to reverse the situation?

How are we to believe that things will change and that people will put their trust in this new government and in the new budget?

• (1635)

In its recent budget, the Liberal government indicated that it would be considering ways of replacing the GST with another tax, one that would not, of course, be less expensive since the government still needs revenues, but one that would be more efficient. Unfortunately, people heard the same song and dance from the Conservative government when the GST was introduced. Yet, it cost more today to administer the GST than the former tax, besides which the GST does not really generate more revenue. All this after taxpayers were forced to spend millions of dollars to meet GST requirements.

How are we supposed to trust the government once again when it speaks of a new tax, when all of the experts are saying that we should wait until this same GST is improved before we think about bringing in a new tax. How are we to restore the public's trust in its institutions? The steady increase in taxes gives the public all the more reason to turn to the underground economy and to contraband. The government has to start by finding a way to make legal work viable.

High levels of public expenditures and government indebtedness impede economic growth to the same degree as the underground economy and smuggling.

If it is to enhance the government's credibility, the budgetary process must be transparent. High-income earners would be willing to make additional sacrifices provided, of course, they