

The Budget

manufacturing slow-downs. The agri-food business has been put under tremendous stress through the free trade agreement and the government is neglecting that responsibility. By cancelling the *Polar 8* ice-breaker, it again adds to unemployment in British Columbia.

As we go down the list, it creates its own crisis and difficulty, and then pushes it off somewhere else. It certainly is an unacceptable situation when I see all these things coming up. There is also the housing crisis and the CBC cuts causing a communication problem throughout this country.

We, as Canadians, are upset with the management of the government. The people of this country have a very clear, strong message to give to the government. With the polls indicating 20 per cent support, they are telling the government that it is doing a terrible job.

Mr. Lewis: It is 19 per cent this morning. Get up to date.

Mr. Pickard: I am averaging my 21 with your 19. The two latest polls give you 20 per cent and that is right up to date.

However, the point is a very clear one. This government is a terrible manager of the economy.

Mr. Wappel: Madam Speaker, may I just begin by congratulating my colleague on another of his excellent and incisive analyses with respect to the Conservative government making our society stray from that which is right and just.

By way of comment and question, I want to ask my colleague a very simple question. I would like him to comment on a particular part of the budget, and that is the very first paragraph in the budget book in which the Minister of Finance indicates and I quote:

Since 1984 this government has been following a consistent and comprehensive plan to ensure that Canadians can benefit from a rising standard of living and a quality of life second to none in the world.

I ask my colleague this question. In Canada today we have high interest rates, a crisis in the Atlantic fishing industry, a 24 per cent illiteracy rate, and the largest debt in the history of our country. As the hon. member pointed out, under this government, increasing poverty is evidenced by the increasing number of food banks springing up across this country, increased taxes on ordinary Canadians and decreased taxes on the corporate elite. Would the hon. member be kind enough to

comment on how the Minister of Finance could possibly have the gall to make the statement that he did?

Mr. Pickard: I thank my hon. colleague for the question. I think he keys in on something that is very relevant to the arrogance that we have seen from the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board when they present that they are on course with an over-all process which is going to enhance our nation and that Canadians are better off. We have gone through six years of very prosperous times and some good economic growth which was not expected to be as strong. What happened within the whole process of growth and prosperity is that the government has set us on a disastrous course of huge debts and huge deficits. Michael Wilson said in his forecast in 1984 that if we followed the Liberal line we would end up at such and such a level of debt and deficit. Instead, we followed this government's line. Here is a statement made clearly by the Chamber of Commerce, normally a strong supporter of this government:

The staggering federal debt figures prove that the Government, despite protestations to the contrary, has failed miserably to address the problem. Virtually every measure it considered unacceptable in 1984 has been surpassed.

This says that maybe it did set a course in 1984 to destroy the country. That is the only answer I can give when it says it is still on course and doing well with the economy. It has increased taxes. It has increased the debt. The interest payments on the debt have doubled. I really do not understand what course it set and what course it is on. It seems to be a course of disaster by a master.

Mr. Fontana: Madam Speaker, let me also take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague from Essex, near London, for his fine presentation on this very important and serious matter, the discussion on the budget. I want to ask him one question.

He has been very insightful in his analysis of the budget and the government's management performance over the past six years. We all know the budget is very much predicated on some assumptions, such as assumptions of growth rate, unemployment rate, interest rates, and so on. The minister obviously has to take into account what the performance of our economy is going to be in 1990. It is clear that not even his most favoured buddies and most favoured clientele in the Canadian constituency agree in fact with his assumptions, especially as they relate to interest rates. Would my colleague