

The Budget

of \$13 billion over the nine years we were the Government of Canada.

Does that mean everything we did was right or perfect? Obviously the answer is no. Those are the facts as opposed to the fiction proposed by others.

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was quite happy to see the hon. member for Sherbrooke here because I wanted to discern his party's position relative to the budget. I was a little disappointed last week when his colleague from Saint John supported the Reform motion calling for the elimination of the deficit within the time of this Parliament.

I did not discern in his speech where he was going in terms of whether it was too tough or not tough enough. Before the last election he proposed the position that the federal government had to work with the provinces to come up with a joint strategy. Do I assume that is no longer the position? Certainly that was indicated last week.

• (1230)

Does the member for Sherbrooke share his colleague's position that the Government of Canada should eliminate the deficit inside this Parliament?

Mr. Charest: Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to answer the question.

There are four things about the budget we think are wrong and need to be addressed. There is no plan or priorities for the country any more with regard to deficit and debt reduction. That means we may run the risk not only of making tough decisions but wrong decisions.

The objective of reducing the deficit to 3 per cent of GDP is not good enough. There should be a clearly enunciated objective of balancing the books within a precise timeframe. Three years is a reasonable timeframe.

Third is its unilateral approach in terms of deficit and debt reduction, which is a complete negation of what a federal country is and how it operates. That puts us in the situation in which we will run the risk of the government's shovelling its deficit and debt problem into the yard of New Brunswick. If it chooses to increase taxes, if it chooses to cut service, we are not going anywhere unless there is a joint effort.

The fourth problem is the hidden agenda. Pension reforms, reform for health care as announced by the Prime Minister are not enunciated in these documents, not clearly laid on the table in terms of the agenda of the government in its document.

The Deputy Speaker: My apologies to the member for Strathcona. I am obliged to go back and forth across the House. Therefore I have to go to the government speaker now. I know the member for Strathcona has been waiting for a long time.

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Finance has tabled the budget Canadians asked for, a budget that is tough but fair, that will allow us to gain control of our deficit, one that has been growing out of control for decades.

We cannot afford to repeat these mistakes. Our government has looked to the future. It could be one in which Canadians are told which services they can and cannot afford by foreign creditors or it can be a future in which Canadians decide their priorities and watch them flourish. The government and the majority of Canadians have chosen the latter.

Our government has taken the necessary measures to ensure Canada's future will be bright and prosperous. Tough decisions had to be made and they were. Our government has produced a plan that is viable and attainable.

I would like to quote from the red book which is often used by opposition parties. Where our policy on Canada's fiscal situation was first outlined it says a Liberal government will adopt a two track fiscal policy, matching a drive for jobs and growth with a comprehensive approach to controlling debt and deficits. That is on page 16.

This is exactly what has been done, from our government's agenda of jobs and growth to the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance.

In producing this budget the minister has taken the time to solicit views of Canadians and all members of Parliament and has reacted to their concerns in delivering a budget that re-established its goal to meet the financial commitments and obligations, the same commitments made during the election campaign and reinforced during the 1994 budget.

The plan outlined by the hon. Minister of Finance will break the back of the deficit and enable us to reach our goal of 3 per cent of gross domestic product by 1997.

• (1235)

Projections indicate that our goal will be exceeded this current fiscal year when the deficit is expected to fall as low as \$38 billion, \$1.7 billion below our target of \$39.7 billion for the end of the fiscal year.

As I listened to the Minister of Finance deliver his budget I realized that it reflected the message impressed upon me by constituents in Carleton—Charlotte. It was the same message impressed upon MPs across the country, including the Minister of Finance.