

*The Budget*

For example, last week in *Maclean's*, with respect to the budget: "The result was an artful balance of minor tax breaks and mostly symbolic spending cuts that the minister assembled after weeks of consultation with special interest groups. In round number the budget contemplates \$159.6 billion in federal spending, \$132.1 billion in revenues, and a deficit that at \$27.5 billion will be \$2.5 billion higher than the one that Mazankowski's predecessor, Michael Wilson, predicted for 1992-93".

This is an analysis by *Maclean's* of what lies behind the numbers, and I note again the minister's rhetoric.

Let me go on to an article of today in *The Globe and Mail* and I quote: "Welfare and working poor families will fall deeper and deeper below the poverty line says the analysis by Ken Battle, President of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy. Mr. Battle says the new federal program is a blatant election year gimmick because it will provide a temporary enrichment in monthly cheques for low income families next year when an election is expected to be called".

The article goes on to say: "The federal proposals are designed to pretend to fight child poverty". Again, and I quote: "Potential benefits will be completely offset by the lack of indexing".

There is the similarity. The car that I dreamt about looked great, but as I looked into it I found the problems. When I look into this budget, I and others are finding the problems. It is an election budget. Some people have called it a pre-election budget. It skilfully pretends to do a lot and does very little.

Again I want to quote from some analysis that were done.

[*Translation*]

It reads: "Don Mazankowski's great tax break boils down to \$2 for a couple with two dependent children and \$15,000 total annual income and \$15 for a couple with two dependent children and \$30,000 annual income". Does the Minister of Finance really expect to be applauded for such ridiculous tax measures?

My colleague, the hon. member for Windsor West, says the minister is playing a game of smoke and mirrors.

Government says it will increase children benefits by \$2.1 billion over the next five years. What it does not say is that it has cut these benefits by \$3.5 million over the past five years.

Here is a quote from my colleague, the member for LaSalle—Émard, associate critic for finance. He said that the new budget does not generate much business confidence. Minor changes to the tax system do not carry much weight *vis-à-vis* high interest rates and a high dollar. He added that the budget basically ignored the two areas the economic future of Canada depends on: training and R and D.

[*English*]

As I indicated, this is a skilfully crafted budget but when it is looked into deeply one finds it has a lot of blemishes, a lot of imperfections. The verdict is still out on the minister with respect to his capabilities as a Minister of Finance. But as a salesperson, as someone who has been given a job, who has been charged with selling this budget, he has got off to reasonable start. In other words, he has not lost his touch.

All hon. members will recognize that virtually all the ministers have made all kinds of eloquent statements with respect to any number of issues in the economic sphere. In speeches from the throne, for example, there have been references to economic, regional and other kinds of development.

In this House of Commons there have been a number of eloquent statements as well, in addresses throughout the country and in its various public relations initiatives such as the prosperity secretariat. The government talks a good story about productivity, about competitiveness, about globalization, but I wonder if it really knows what it is talking about.

Let us look at the record. We know that taxes have gone up 33 or 34 times. People are angry that they are earning less today than they were a few years ago. We know that in spite of those 30-plus tax increases, the deficit is roughly where it was. We know that the debt has more than doubled and yes, the government has almost doubled the revenues since it came into power a little more than seven years ago.

There are still five million people who are living at the level of poverty or below. Roughly 1.5 million people are unemployed. Roughly two million people are on social assistance. People have suffered personal bankruptcies and business bankruptcies are higher than they have ever been before. Roughly two million people are being fed by food banks. Many of the casualties here are women. Many of the casualties are children and young Canadians, and that saddens me.