

Oral Questions

Today, in tabling its Main Estimates, the government failed to provide detailed spending plans in the form of Part IIIs for 14 key departments and agencies covering some 60 per cent of its expenditures.

I ask the President of the Treasury Board just why has it failed to do this. Just what is the government trying to hide?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, in answer to my hon. colleague, I would like to say we are not going to hide anything at all. It was done for security purposes.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1420)

Mr. de Cotret: Part III of the Main Estimates that were directly referred to in the budget began to be printed when the Minister of Finance stood in this House to make his budget speech.

Given the number of volumes we have to print, I was able to make the undertaking this morning that those would be before all members of this House on or before March 12. It is only for security purposes.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the detailed spending plans in the form of Part IIIs have always been presented as part of the Main Estimates.

The government has presented six budgets. It knows the form and detail of the Estimates. It knows how important this information is to Canadians.

I ask the President of the Treasury Board: Is the government, in effect, now admitting its incompetence, or is it simply trying to cook the books?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the government is saying that it is maintaining the security of the whole budget process, a long-held tradition in this place and in the Government of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, in the past, Budget security was tight, but nevertheless it was possible to table all sections of the Estimates at once. Mr. Speaker, 65 per cent of government expenditures go to these 14 departments. The government seems to know how to increase taxes 31 times, but it doesn't know how

to account for two-thirds of the finances of this country! My question is quite simple: Why do we have a Minister of Finance and a President of the Treasury Board, considering that they clearly have not done their job, which was to inform the public of the details of the Budget and the Main Estimates?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, this morning I tabled Part II of the Main Estimates, which is about two inches thick and provides details on all government programs, departments and agencies. Perhaps the hon. member could consult that document, and in a matter of days, he will get the rest of the details in Part III.

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Could the Minister of Finance confirm to the House and to Canadians that in order to meet the objectives set forth in his Budget, it will be necessary to create a recession in this country? In the Budget papers he said that the first quarter of 1990 would see a drop in economic growth, which would be a negative point. Is it part of the minister's plan to ensure there is a recession, in order to meet the objectives he listed in his Budget?

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think it is typical of the hon. member to walk around with a little black cloud over his head looking for recessions.

We do not believe that there will be a recession. As I made quite clear in the budget statement there will be a period of slow growth, a period that is necessary to get the inflationary pressures out of the system.

As that happens we see a recovery very quickly toward the end of this year and into next year, at which time I am confident we will be back on a non-inflationary growth path that will be healthy for all parts of the country.

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Finance.

The minister states that he has to create the necessary economic environment for sustained reductions in Canadian interest rates. I want to ask the minister again referring to his budget documents about the unemployment rate that will rise, and I am quoting, "throughout 1990".