

The Budget—Mrs. Collins

internationalism and social justice. I will not talk about the accomplishments that we have made in these three areas. I will not refer to the Meech Lake Accord, the Commonwealth Conference, the international summit which is coming up and, in the area of social justice, the many changes we have made to the Criminal Code. I will not refer to affirmative action or the whole gamut of items which have increased the quality of life for Canadians. Today I will talk about economic reform.

When we took office three and a half years ago we set that as an important priority. We all recall the situation that the economy was in at that time. When we look at the changes that have occurred in three and a half years and when we consider the sound fiscal management which the Auditor General has given recognition to we see that it is really quite a remarkable record.

When the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Turner) was speaking about 30 minutes ago he made some allusions to the Olympics in Calgary about which we are so proud. We are proud of those Canadians who have won medals for us, Brian Orser, Karen Percy, Linda Moore of North Vancouver who won the gold medal in women's curling, and Sylvie Daigle who won a gold medal yesterday in the women's short-track speed skating. These are outstanding Canadians, as are all the other Canadians who have been participating in the Olympics. They have instilled a sense of pride in us all.

It is important to recognize that Canada deserves a gold medal too since Canada is first in terms of economic growth. Indeed, we have been first each year over the last few years. We have placed well above most other industrialized nations. Real output growth has been estimated at 3.8 per cent in 1987. A statistic such as this may sound dry. What does 3.8 per cent mean? We all know that it translates into jobs. It means that families are enjoying a better quality of life, more security and that our young people are getting jobs. It means that some of our older people are able to stay on in the work force. So it seems to me that in this couple of weeks in which we are giving out gold medals for outstanding achievement in athletics the Minister of Finance should also receive a gold medal in recognition of Canada being number one in economic growth. Since Canada is also number one in terms of job creation he should be made a double medal winner. These achievements seem to me to deserve a gold medal.

We have all heard the statistics. Over 1.1 million jobs have been created since our Government took office. Some 486,000 jobs were created in 1987 alone. The majority of these jobs are full-time jobs in occupations with above average wage levels. As the Minister responsible for the status of women stated in her speech the other day, it is interesting to note the number of women who have filled the new jobs created over the past 3.5 years, and that 55 per cent of those jobs for women have been in the administrative and the professional areas. That means that they are in and going into the higher income areas. A terrific amount of change and advancement of the economy is occurring throughout the country.

• (1640)

As a result of that, we have seen the unemployment rate drop down to 8.1 per cent. That is the lowest it has been since September, 1981. The economic and employment growth last year were also more evenly spread throughout the country. That is something that we all feel strongly that we want to achieve.

In terms of the other indicators, inflation declined to 4.2 per cent by the end of 1987. It averaged only 4.4 per cent for the year as a whole. We all know the story of interest rates which means that mortgages have gone down by 3 per cent. To the person holding a mortgage of \$50,000 on a house it means \$1,200 less per year in mortgage payments. When you take all of those factors together, it is really an outstanding accomplishment which touches every man, woman, and family throughout the country, that indeed they are better off as a result of the Government's initiatives.

In light of the comments of the Leader of the Official Opposition what has happened is interesting. The plan that we presented in 1984 was to create a positive environment in which the free enterprise system could flourish, in which small business could develop, and in which the entrepreneurial spirit would grow in this country. We as a Party believe in the individual. We believe in the free enterprise system.

My hon. friend, the Leader of the Opposition, in his comments stated that "We don't know about that". What he was saying sounded to me as though the Liberal Party does not seem to believe much more in the free market system and would want to intervene. Probably they want to bring back the NEP which this Government got rid of because of its horrendous impact on the economy of western Canada. That Party would probably want to bring back FIRA, which indeed created fear in the hearts of potential investors and turned them away. This Government got rid of that.

We are now seeing the positive influx of investment dollars, particularly in British Columbia, which is well above the national average and which means so much for the ordinary Canadian. It seems that the Leader of the Opposition not only wants to tear up the free trade agreement, he wants to bring back an era that, in my mind, would lead to despair in the hearts of Canadians across the country.

I wish to turn to the control of the deficit. In my constituency of Capilano I receive a lot of questions on that subject. I met with some groups over the past two weeks to talk about the Budget. I am constantly asked, "What has your Government done to deal with the deficit?" People are very concerned about it. They know that in their own households if they spend \$4,000 or \$5,000 more each year than they are bringing in, they will soon be in trouble with their friendly banker. When they see the government deficit rising or seeming to be as it was prior to 1984, and out of control, it is a cause of considerable concern.