

Mr. Speaker, I ask myself, why did the Prime Minister not meet with these people? These are the real Canadians in my view. These are the people who really contribute to building this country. We know that they pay most of the taxes to support this country anyway with their revenues. So why? Because I honestly believe that Canadians are starting to see that this Government has decided who their friends are. Their friends are from the corporate boardrooms.

An Hon. Member: It is not the mothers of Canada.

Mr. Rodriguez: Of course not the moms, of course not the unemployed. They don't even understand. We heard of the Prime Minister's wife going to open a food bank here in Ottawa. Imagine that. I can just imagine it. Their own lifestyle epitomizes the chasm which exists between the people in this country who are poor and who do not have homes and those who have it all so posh and so plentiful.

The Minister of Finance has been touted as a man of considerable courage. They said he has so much integrity, so much competence. This is why the Prime Minister could not bounce him. We are told that Bay Street was up in arms. They were phoning the Prime Minister's office. The telex machines and the fax machines were running overtime. All of Bay Street were baying "Keep Mike, Keep Mike" because we are told that Mike Wilson, the Finance Minister, has courage and integrity and competence and he also has friends. His friends are in high places. His friends reside in the boardrooms. Does it take a lot of courage, I ask you, to cut spending in the foreign aid budget, to cut food for the starving of this world? Does it take guts to do that? Does it take a lot of courage to eliminate child care spaces in this country when there is a great and expanding need for it? At the same time, their friends in high places owe \$35 billion in deferred taxes. Does it take a lot of courage?

• (1740)

The President of Costa Rica was here not so long ago and was introduced in the House. The Prime Minister said to the President:

We know the impact of poverty and violence in Central America. For this reason, Canadian economic assistance has more than tripled in the past decade and will increase significantly during the next.

The Budget—Mr. Rodriguez

This is the same Prime Minister with a Budget that takes millions of dollars out of our foreign aid over the next five years. Does it take courage to do that?

During the last campaign we heard a lot from the Prime Minister about the promises that had been made. We all remember those promises such as the upgrader at Lloydminster, Hibernia, and the tar sands. When we stated that those were promises that were being made before the election, we were told that they were not promises but that they were spending commitments. Now we are told that they are no longer in effect. They are gone. Is that integrity?

The Finance Minister stated the reason that he had to bring in such a tough Budget was that there was this sudden jump in interest rates after the election and it forced the Government to abandon all those spending commitments—promises. That whole business of spending commitments—Budgets, how it can play with words.

It is like the Prime Minister getting what was supposed to be a loan from the PC Canada Fund for all his personal expenses and Gucci shoes. When we pointed out that it was a loan and that it should have been recorded, it then became an advance. It was a loan—advance. Here we have spending commitments—promises. The Prime Minister said that he had to abandon them because of the sudden rise in interest rates. Last November during the election the interest rates were already three points higher than what the last Budget had forecast.

Everything the Finance Minister had forecast was blown to smithereens. That is not the hallmark of a competent Minister of Finance, or one with integrity, but he has a lot of courage. One can have a lot of courage with a squash ball and a nice big racket, and old John Crow and those other birds over at the Bank of Canada helping. It is pretty easy to smash them around.

Is it competent to continue as the Government has, even after making people pay? This is short-term pain for long-term pain. Even after all these squeezings, the Government is still projecting a deficit of \$30 billion, and a projected national debt in 1991 of some \$400 billion. What type of competence is that? That is managing debt. During the campaign we heard that this was a Government that knew how to manage change. It could not even manage to deliver a Budget without leaking it.

What we are now hearing from the Minister of Finance is "sharing the burden". As the Government claws back \$320 million from the bank presidents and all these big wigs the Government claims it is clawing back this old age pension. If a person is non-resident in this