

The Budget—Mr. Turner

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): No. It has increased by 66 per cent since the Government took office. Let us go through the numbers.

Mr. Layton: It is a straight carry-over.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I am sorry that my friend from the West Island of Montreal did not hear my speech yesterday. He might have learned something. We were looking for his presence. He would have added a little comic relief to the afternoon.

In the 117 years of Confederation prior to 1984 when the Government took office, successive Governments incurred a total national debt of \$178.6 billion. Then came the Minister of Finance, a knight in shining armour, some latter-day participant of the round table. He was going to smite that debt with his sword like it had never been smitten before, but like the round table of Prince Arthur, that commitment turned out to be a complete myth. After three and a half years the Minister's armour is not nearly so shiny. Instead of reducing the debt, thanks to this Minister and this Government, it has gone up to \$293.4 billion, an increase of \$116.6 billion or 66 per cent in the last three and a half years.

[Translation]

In other words, in three and half years the Minister has managed to accumulate more debt than all his predecessors were able to accumulate in over a century. Not bad! He is responsible for 40 per cent of the total debt incurred by Canada since Confederation. Forty per cent of the total public debt since Confederation in only three and half years! That is a record! He deserves a gold medal. He should come to Calgary with me this weekend, and I will give him a gold medal. Because of his record, he also deserves a silver and a bronze medal, as the champion of public debt since Confederation.

This Finance Minister has accumulated more debt than most of his predecessors put together. It will probably be an interesting detail to add to his biography, but it is a crushing burden on future generations of Canadians.

[English]

The Minister is also the leading candidate for a medal in the double back flip. I do not know whether you have been watching the free style skiing, Mr. Speaker, but there have been some great performances; Canadians are doing very well. The Minister showed a lot of style. We got a double back flip. We remember when he was at the top of the hill in 1984, standing with the Prime Minister and saying that he was going to get at that deficit and he was not going to raise taxes. He was not going to raise taxes. He was going to lower expenditures. That was a solemn commitment. It was one of those sacred trusts. Off they went and the Government has been back flipping ever since on that particular promise to Canadians. Although that event is closed, I think I can strike another medal just by way of supplementary for the Minister's personal library giving him credit for that bit of downhill acrobatics. I can get into the downhill, of course, Mr. Speaker.

The Government has been going downhill for the past three and one half years as well.

• (1540)

Let us go through some of the numbers. The very first thing the Minister did in office was to slap a 3 per cent surtax on income. He had a special 5 to 10 per cent sale tax on the very wealthy. He removed that tax, preferring to hit low and middle income Canadians, and he came up with the \$500,000 capital gains tax exemption. In the last three and a half years there has been an orgy of Tory taxes. In three and a half years the Conservatives have raised the excise tax on gasoline by 5 cents a litre or 23 cents a gallon. A sales tax increase on gasoline add another 1 cent per litre in this Budget or 4 cents a gallon, for a total increase of 27 cents a gallon on gas since the Government took office.

I am sorry the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie) is not here. I am surprised he has not objected. In that great Budget of his in 1979 when he lost the confidence of the House, and the people of Canada rejected the Conservative Government under leadership of the now Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark), he was only up to 18 cents a gallon. He was a piker. He did not know in the House this afternoon what has happened to airline fares between Newfoundland, London and Toronto. That does not surprise anyone in the House, but that he should allow his successor, the Minister of Finance in the Conservative administration, to beat his great record of 18 cents and get up to 23 cents a gallon, well, that is our Minister of Finance and that is a real record.

There is virtually no aspect of Canadian activity on which the Minister has not either increased tax or added a new one. I am not at all convinced that this Government will stay in power too much longer. Its time is numbered but it would like to tax other things. I do not want to speculate, however.

[Translation]

In addition to very substantial increases in the tax on gas which, because of the regressive nature of these increases, hits low-income citizens hardest, especially those who must use a car to get to work, the Government has increased the federal sales tax three times in three and half years: from 9 per cent to 10 per cent; from 10 per cent to 11 per cent; and from 11 per cent to 12 per cent. And sales tax has been extended to goods on which no sales tax was paid before.

Again, low and middle income Canadians will be paying a disproportionate share of this regressive tax.

[English]

The Minister promised tax reform. Tax reform under this Minister has become a fraud. He promised to change the sales tax. He said in last year's Budget that the "federal sales tax is unfair and inefficient. It is a silent killer of jobs". Those were his words. The only change he has made has been to increase it. He is like a doctor who knows that a certain drug is harmful but, without knowing the reason, keeps giving you an increased dosage hoping for a cure. We must add to that the taxes on