

Oral Questions

As far as the use of the funds is concerned, the Hon. Member will remember that in the Budget of last year I indicated that the purpose of the Canadian ownership tax would be broadened to cover the general area of energy self-sufficiency. The funds are going to be used for the purpose of ensuring energy self-sufficiency in this country, particularly in the area of oil and gas. We have made tremendous progress in the last three years in that regard, and we want to ensure that we will continue to make progress. This is the purpose for which that tax will be used.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, this is a continuance of a tissue of deception. The Minister has launched a smash and grab raid, unauthorized by this House of Commons, on that fund.

SIZE OF GOVERNMENT DEFICIT

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, the Minister shows in his Budget statement of six days ago that the Budget deficit will be \$31.5 billion. To get it down to \$31.5 billion, he has taken \$500 million which was allocated in that fund for Dome. If the Minister has to pay the \$500 million out to Dome, the deficit will go up to \$32 billion. Will the Minister tell the House what the deficit is for the year which ends at the end of March? When is he going to stop deceiving, misconstruing, and deluding the people of Canada? When will we get honest counsel and honest accounting?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the deficit for this year is forecast to be \$31.5 billion. The Hon. Member asks me what the deficit will be at the end of March. I will be able to give him the exact figure as soon as it is computed at the end of March, or later on. He will remember that the deficit figures last year varied considerably, depending not only on the expenditures which the Government incurred in March, but also on the receipts which came from corporate and personal income tax during the month of March. I do not know exactly what those figures will be—

Mr. Crosbie: There is \$500 million.

Mr. Lalonde: —but I will be very happy to provide my friend with the exact figure as soon as it is available. At the present time it is forecast to be \$31.5 billion—

Mr. Crosbie: And it could be anything.

Mr. Lalonde: In the meantime I am still waiting for the Hon. Member to tell the Canadian people what the mean, nasty things are he would do—

Mr. Crosbie: You are a mean, nasty thing I would eliminate.

Mr. Lalonde: —to them if that Party were in office.

Mr. Crosbie: Five hundred million dollars you have stolen from that fund.

THE ECONOMY

PLIGHT OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Figures released today show that in Ontario, the richest province in Canada, 17 per cent of all children, or close to 400,000, are living in poverty. Across the country, we are told, children as young as five are lining up at soup kitchens, sometimes without their parents, just to get enough to eat. Their parents have no hope of getting jobs. Does the Minister think that it is fair or tolerable that children are the main victims of the recession? Why has he ignored their plight, the plight of low-income families? Why, instead, has he chosen to give some \$675 million in tax breaks to people who can afford to put \$15,000 a year into a savings plan?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, again I refer the Hon. Member to the Budget of last year, as well as to my announcement this year, that all the family allowances and tax credits are going to be fully indexed starting on January 1, 1985. The Hon. Member will remember that last year I appreciably increased the tax credit for families. In addition, I have to remind the hon. lady that the Provinces have a significant responsibility in that regard, as well in terms of Children's Aid and the various programs which are under provincial responsibility, particularly, social assistance.

Ms. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, the Minister, who was a former Minister of Health and Welfare, should know what happens to children who are brought up in poverty. He brags about a safety net. These children are not safe; they are at risk. Poverty begets poverty. He should know that. He does know it. He does not want to admit it.

TAX REFORMS RECOMMENDED BY NATIONAL ANTI-POVERTY ORGANIZATION

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Would the Minister tell the House why, when he was preparing his Budget, he did not adopt the family benefit tax reforms which were recommended by the National Anti-Poverty Organization, which would not have cost him another cent, so that the money could be converted to increase family allowances for children? Tax credits at the end of the year are not useful to poor people. It is a monthly family allowance they need. The Minister could have increased this if he had paid any attention to the NAPO recommendations.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that poverty begets poverty. The Government has taken steps. Of all of the industrialized countries, including the socialist Governments which are referred to so often by my socialist friends opposite, the Canadian Government has been the only one which has not cut back on social security and on social programs.