

That did not happen by accident. The Minister of Finance was absolutely right when he said that individual Canadians have created jobs. We should be giving credit to them. Let me tell Hon. Members what would have happened if unemployment had gone up. The Government would have been blamed if it had. Again, the Hon. Member cannot have it both ways. If he wants to be consistent he should realize that when he makes that type of statement he looks silly in terms of being critical of the Government by not giving us credit when there is some credit due. I am not saying that we are doing everything right. All I am trying to say is let us have a bit of balance in the speeches. In that way we will all be given a great deal more credit in the House. If Hon. Members have some concerns then they should do their homework and lay out some alternatives.

I would like to read more of what the Minister had to say in his speech.

Canadians should understand how remarkable this achievement is. During the past 18 months our rate of job creation has been more than 50 per cent higher than in the United States. Even more remarkable, Canadians have created more jobs, in absolute terms, than all the Western European countries combined—countries which together have 16 times our population.

That tells Hon. Members something about what we are doing as a Government. We have to be doing a few things right or we would not have that type of record in terms of job creation.

As Governments become larger and larger, which is what has happened to almost every country in the world in the last number of years, it becomes more important that what they do they do right, because they account for a bigger percentage of the economy. If Governments, including the federal Government, had not been doing a few things right, and if everything had been so wrong, as we are led to believe by the remarks of the Hon. Member, we would not have that type of record in job creation. That is something which needs to be understood. We need to stand up and show some pride in what we are doing in the country. The more we do that the better it will be for all of us. We have an absolutely tremendous country. We have more natural resources per capita than any country in the world. The future should be ours; it can be ours if we would stop mortgaging our future. That has been the problem in the past. It is a problem which has been aided and abetted by the NDP in support of the Liberals in the past.

I would now like to tell Hon. Members what is even more remarkable about the Minister of Finance. We all know how difficult it is to reduce expenditures once they are in place. When we talk to our constituents they tell us that they know that. They say: "We know that you did something for us in the past but what are you doing for us today?" We are all like that. When considering that type of attitude one begins to realize the many things that make it difficult to reduce expenditures.

I would now like to tell Hon. Members about our expenditure record and what has happened in that regard. I will read more of what the Minister had to say in his budget speech. If I had the time I would reread the whole speech to the Hon. Member opposite and members of his Party. They obviously

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did not listen to the Minister of Finance a week ago when he tabled his Budget.

Over the last decade, program expenditures had more than doubled. Discretionary spending—spending on non-statutory programs—had grown even faster. In the three years prior to this Government taking office, discretionary spending grew by 43 per cent. Operating costs of Government departments increased by 30 per cent. Personnel costs grew by 20 per cent.

Let me tell Hon. Members what has happened in the 18 months since we have been in office. It will show what one can do if one has some responsibility and is determined to do something on behalf of the country. We have a good Minister of Finance. This is what he had to say.

Total program spending, including all statutory programs such as Old Age Security, family allowances and unemployment insurance, will be held to \$86.6 billion—lower than last year's spending.

This is the first absolute decline in total program spending in over 20 years.

That tells Hon. Members something about what can be done if one has some determination. We have done that by improving the pension system and by introducing new child tax benefits to increase assistance.

I would now like to deal with the budgetary process. Hon. Members have talked about keeping commitments. That is exactly what we have done. We have done exactly what we said we would do when we came to office. When we came to office we said that we would prepare a financial statement as quickly as we could and give a public accounting on the nation's finances to the people of the country. That is exactly what the Minister of Finance did. He said he would present a Budget as quickly as he could and then consult before a new budget was tabled. That is exactly what happened. In terms of what we have said we would do we have been entirely consistent. That is very important to understand. What this process does is bring back some ordinary common sense management to the finances of the nation. Above all, the largest responsibility which any Government has is to manage responsibly the fiscal affairs of the country. That is what has happened.

I understand that the Hon. Member opposite has some economic training. He can talk about the percentage of the GNP that is appropriate as far as the size of the deficit is concerned. One can enter into all types of arguments in this regard. Not once in the Hon. Member's speech did he say anything about what he thought the appropriate size of the deficit should be. He talked about the "Holy Grail" of the deficit. I assume by that he meant the Holy Grail of trying to reduce the deficit, as if that is the only thing we think about.

Mr. Orlikow: Isn't it?

Mr. Mayer: We did not hear from the Hon. Member in that regard. We did not hear anything from the Hon. Member with respect to what he thought the appropriate size of the deficit should be. Should it be \$30 billion, \$50 billion or \$100 billion? Depending on what the amount is, how do we get there? I am saying that in front of us we have something which we have demonstrated by clear action in the past 18 months. The Government is committed to a regular process as far as