

The Budget—Mr. Best

Mr. Alexander Best (Halton): Mr. Speaker, I am happy today to be able to make a few remarks during the continuation of the budget debate. First of all I should like to compliment some of those who spoke to the house last night, the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Browne) and the hon. member for Iles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Keays), for the interesting information they brought before the house on various aspects of the supplementary budget. The situation was covered to a great extent, as I have said, by these members and others such as the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Bell), who spoke yesterday afternoon.

My own feelings over the Christmas recess, and the impression I gained from my constituents and others, was that the supplementary budget was indeed a sound one and brought forward most important changes in economic structure from Canada's point of view. As some have pointed out, it was not a budget that would perhaps affect directly the taxation position of every individual in this country in the most immediate sense but it was a broad and basic budget, one which in the long run and, indeed, in the short run in many cases, will affect us all. I feel that it was a national budget without being strictly a nationalistic budget, one which was Canadian in its scope, not anti-American, one which should help and aid the growth of our country in the months and years ahead.

It had as a most important secondary effect, and indeed one of the most important effects of all, that of bringing the Canadian dollar closer to par with the United States dollar. This is a problem about which I have received many letters, as I am sure other hon. members have as well. It is a most important matter, and the change in recent weeks is having and has had a very beneficial effect on the economic life of our country.

There are a few matters in this supplementary budget upon which I should like to touch briefly. The first is the increased depreciation applicable to new industrial plants either in areas in which there is a labour surplus or which will be manufacturing new products. I feel this important measure will have a healthy effect on many areas of our country. I can think of more than one manufacturer in my own riding who has mentioned this matter in recent months and years. I am convinced that these manufacturers will be taking positive action now as a result of this budgetary change.

Then there is the question of taxation in so far as the income of university students is concerned or the support they receive from their parents. This is another problem that has annoyed and frustrated people for many years. I believe this budgetary change is a

[Mr. Balcer.]

good one. It is one upon which I have received many letters in recent months. I think the Minister of Finance is to be complimented upon these and other measures brought about in the budget.

I believe all hon. members on this side of the house are glad indeed, Mr. Speaker, to see most members of the Liberal opposition back in good health. They seem to have had a rather rough time last week at the Coliseum. As a matter of fact I was wondering, as various members of the Liberal opposition struggled to head up or head off various resolutions, whether or not control of the party was leaving them behind, or where the control really lay. Of course the old timers were there, all the old gang. We saw the old faces; the members of the boards of directors, the people who have been in the background and the foreground of this party, guiding its destiny for many years. Nothing had changed.

Nevertheless there was an outcry from the young Liberals, who were there in large numbers. They really did not get their way. They were trampled, they were pushed into the corner, but they did make their voice heard. Perhaps, at long last, we are seeing a breath of fresh air blown into the Liberal party. I see the hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) smiling. We did not hear too much from him. Perhaps he is waiting for some more propitious time to voice his goals and his aspirations. When we did hear from him, it seemed to be in a negative way. He did not seem to agree with the health and welfare resolutions. He did not want his hands tied because at some time in the future he may wish to introduce measures of his own. What really disappointed me, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that we heard nothing at all from him on the subject of agriculture. As the agricultural critic of the Liberal party, and as one farmer to another, I thought at least he should have given the meeting the benefit of his opinions on various subjects such as soybeans, sugar beets, rapeseed and other agricultural commodities. We did not hear very much about that. Their agricultural platform was a void.

As a matter of fact we heard very little about agriculture and about a good many other things. I was interested in fiscal and monetary policy. There were a number of resolutions brought forward about which we heard very little except some vague references to a national planning commission, socialism at its height. Various members of the press have said it is a question whether the members of the Liberal party lunged to the left, lurched to the left or were dragged skyward or the other way. It is still a question, because no one knows where the Liberal