

Having said that the budget is not expansionary enough and that we think a good deal more needs to be done, may I say it is still the best budget we have seen in the last half-dozen years. I do not think that is an accident. I think the government is reacting to the fact that it has lost its majority—and so it should. I believe the government is reacting to the fact that it is in a minority position, so it is willing, as it should be, to listen to what the people of Canada are saying to us both inside and outside parliament. It is prepared to do something minimal to meet some of the needs of the Canadian people. It will do something in order to hang on to power and continue in government.

• (1750)

Let me say that this budget is not an NDP budget. It does not begin to meet the needs of the people of Canada in terms of dealing with unemployment, a problem with which Canada has been plagued for many years under Liberal and Conservative governments.

The hon. member for Rocky Mountain (Mr. Clark) talked about this party being a party of dinosaurs. I suggest the hon. member should look at what is happening in the world, particularly in western Europe. We find a socialist democratic government in Germany, Sweden and Denmark, a labour party in Norway which has been in power for most of the past 30 years, and very likely a socialist party in power in France after the next election, with a labour opposition in Great Britain that will probably come back into office after the next election. These are parties with which we are associated on the international scene. If the hon. member for Rocky Mountain wants to talk about dinosaurs, he should look at his own party because that is the party going out of style. Before I finish, let me say one more thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Mr. Joseph-Philippe Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words in respect of the budget presented to the House by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner). In my opinion it is the best budget we have had because it contains so many things of benefit to the citizens of this country, particularly those with lower incomes. It will also help in solving problems associated with unemployment.

I was very pleased to see included in the budget increases in old age security benefits and the basic supplementary pension. I am also pleased to note that there is an increase in the appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs to cover the costs arising from the committee's study of the recommendations of Canadian veterans' associations. These associations unanimously recommended adoption of the report of the committee, which would mean an increase in veterans pensions which they so rightfully deserve. I hope members of this House will adopt the same attitude as members of the committee and will accept the recommendations so that veterans or their widows will receive these benefits as soon as possible.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Tell the government to bring in the bill.

The Budget—Mr. J.-P. Guay

An hon. Member: It is coming.

Mr. Foster: Wait until Friday, Stanley.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has always played an important role in the field of pensions, and I wholeheartedly support his request to the government to present this bill as soon as possible.

I was also pleased by the recommendation of the veterans affairs committee in respect of pensions based on the recommendations of the joint committee regarding standard of living. It was my hope that there would be in the budget an announcement in respect of railroad pensioners, particularly in view of the recommendations of many members of this side of the House and the fact that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) had a chance to speak to the presidents of both railways regarding parity of railroad pensions with those of Air Canada. I await with anticipation such an announcement. The national president of the Railway Pension Association, Mr. Jack Pickett, in one of his recent letters urged Members of Parliament to support changes in the CNR pension plan. He said:

I would urge all MPs to support changes in the CNR pension plan—now. We want the same as those employed by other Crown corporations. We are prepared to pay the same, no more, no less, and it must be on a retroactive basis.

I should like to raise another important matter which has no reference to the budget. Members on the government side, including parliamentary secretaries, are not given the same opportunity as opposition Members of Parliament to ask questions during the question period. It is true that members on this side can ask questions of ministers outside this House and receive appropriate answers. It is also true that members of the opposition, regardless of party affiliation, can ask questions of ministers outside the House and receive satisfactory answers: they can do so verbally or in writing.

I was told this afternoon by two ministers that in some instances their departments provided written answers to written questions by opposition members, yet very often the questions are also asked orally during the question period. In this way, opposition members can have their questions and answers recorded in *Hansard* and use *Hansard* to supply information to their constituents. Surely backbenchers on the government side, and parliamentary secretaries, should have equal rights because they are also Members of Parliament.

May I call it six o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock p.m.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, to continue my speech from before the dinner hour, I should like to read