

The Budget—Mr. R. A. Bell

by percentage increases in product prices considerably in excess of 5 per cent. I predict to the Minister of Finance that a year from now he will be most unhappily aware that his panacea, his cure-all, in fact will have spread the disease.

Equally, Mr. Speaker, I think it is difficult to understand the failure of the minister to make any attempt to balance the budget. Deliberately in boom times he plans a budget deficit of \$150 million, and at the very time when the policies of the government have made money tighter than at any time since 1957 he plans to go into the market for a cash requirement of \$500 million in 1966-67, as opposed to only \$187 million in the last year. Clearly what he is doing is trying to pull himself up by his bootstraps. I suggest that he will succeed only in confounding his own problems.

Mr. Sharp: Could I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has been very good at getting up and asking questions, and bootlegging questions at that. I will answer his question at the end of my speech.

Mr. Chrétien: You are afraid.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): I intend to make a full presentation and I will answer the minister's question at the end of my speech. But I would ask him not to bootleg questions as he has done constantly, sitting in close proximity to *Hansard* and putting so many comments on the record.

Mr. Sharp: I thought my hon. friend would be flattered to know I was listening to his speech. I am just trying to be helpful.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): I put it to the house and to the country that if our national budget cannot be brought into balance at a time which the Minister of Finance alleges to be our greatest boom, then when can it be? Surely it is monstrous to suggest that we can go on and on in years of prosperity, ever increasing the national debt, ever living beyond our means, without anticipating a day of fiscal reckoning. If there is any validity at all in cyclical budgeting, and I believe there is, then how can anyone doubt what stage of the cycle we have achieved in 1966? Once again the Minister of Finance has allowed himself merely to be the prisoner of events, instead of attempting to act as captain of the nation's fiscal fate.

[Mr. Bell (Carleton).]

What I have said here, Mr. Speaker, must apply equally in connection with the spreading crisis in our balance of payments position. All the minister does is to view it with alarm, to suggest that we must develop a long-term balance of payments policy, and then he retreats without even suggesting a palliative.

• (8:30 p.m.)

One of the aspects of the minister's speech which fascinated me was his pinpointing at one stage of his speech of the year 1962—and at another stage he said "five years ago"—as the period when the upturn in our economy gained momentum. What a difference there is between this confession and what the minister and his colleagues are prone to assert on the hustings. But now at least we have his acknowledgement that it was the policies of the former government which sparked the upturn. The real fact is that our present state of economic well-being is firmly grounded in the devaluation of the dollar, a policy once scorned, sneered at and vilified by most hon. gentlemen opposite. They are now the inheritors of the benefits of the very policies that they pilloried. The genuine basis of our economic well-being is in the policies introduced by the former hon. member for Eglinton, Hon. Donald M. Fleming, who I believe, sir, will be established in history as one of the most intelligent, courageous, and far-sighted ministers of finance of all time.

Sir, in my view the Budget is much more significant with respect to the matters with which it does not deal than with respect to the evasive pronouncements over the limited range with which it does deal. It is much more significant in its omissions than in its inclusions or its proposals. I want to deal with three matters virtually ignored in the budget, agriculture, education and federal-provincial relations.

Can you imagine, sir, a budget of Canada with only two parts of a sentence—I repeat—with only two parts of a sentence mentioning the farm industry? In mentioning that fact, sir, I am aware that you come from Stormont, and that you know the picture in eastern Ontario. In one part of the sentence the minister states that "the prospects for wheat sales are good" and in another he announces the deferment of commencement of construction of buildings on the satellite experimental farm. There is not another mention of agriculture in the whole speech. There is not even a forecast in the review of economic conditions.