

Speaker, that the first time I was ever in the House was as a sitting member. At first I was awestricken; now I am only slightly confused by the procedures. But I hasten to add that I have no doubt as to my role as a member of parliament in this House, this crucible of democracy in Canada. I am sobered by my responsibilities and duties.

As a supporter of the government in power, I am expected to criticize constructively government policy and to offer my own opinions and ideas. It is true that I am not as vocally prominent in the House as my colleagues who form the opposition, but my reticence does not extend to our regional or national caucuses. I am a Liberal by choice. I choose to be a member of the Liberal party because it satisfies my own personal beliefs, and I believe it encompasses the hopes and aspirations of the majority of Canadians. This was borne out by the results of the July 8 election.

Canada is part of the international community of nations and it readily embraces this most important role. For years our peacekeeping forces have spread our reputation as a nation which is strong, understanding, fair minded and decisive.

● (1800)

[Translation]

The prophecy made by Victor Hugo at the Paris Peace Conference held in 1849 comes to my mind. Here is its most celebrated excerpt: "A day will come when war will seem absurd, a day will come when there will be no battlefields other than markets open to trade and minds open to ideas. A day will come where cannonballs and bombs will be replaced by votes and universal suffrage throughout the nations. A day will come when cannons will be shown in museums just as instruments of torture are being shown today. A day will come when we will see two huge groups, the United States of America, North America and South America, standing face to face, with the United States of Europe extending hands across the seas and exchanging their goods, their trade, their industries, their arts and their genius."

Mr. Speaker, to my mind, that day has come.

[English]

I look forward to the months and the years ahead during which I will be sharing in the decisions of this superb legislative body. It is quite probable that the awe of my first days will be replaced by a reverence which is reserved for quasi religious bodies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): Order, please. It being after 6 p.m., I do now leave the Chair until eight o'clock this evening.

At 6.05 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. John Wise (Elgin): Madam Speaker, may I say what a great pleasure it is for me to join other hon. members of the House in the debate on the budget. Before

The Budget—Mr. Wise

I begin my remarks may I congratulate the freshman member from southwestern Ontario, my neighbour, the hon. member for Oxford (Mr. Halliday). It is clear from his fine performance in the House this afternoon that he will continue to represent that old riding in Ontario, Oxford, in the very fine manner in which it was represented for 21 years by the late Wally Nesbitt.

I sat quietly and listened attentively on budget night while the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) delivered his 18,000-word document. The minister has acquired the ability to make a good presentation in this House, and elsewhere for that matter, regardless of the merit or content of that presentation, be it good, bad or indifferent; I sincerely extend that courtesy to him personally and regret that he is not present to hear my remarks. The budget is unique inasmuch as the foreword, preamble, observations, international scanning and comparisons make up the bulk of the text. The actual changes and adjustments are dealt with like passing flashes in the night. Descriptions of his address are many and varied. Some describe it as a consumer budget; others simply as a bad example. Some see it as a tightrope walk or a rerun of something old, something new.

I do not want to reject the budget outright, Madam Speaker, for some of its proposals, as far as they go, are both necessary and welcome. The reduction of the sales tax to 5 per cent from 11 per cent and 12 per cent on building and construction materials, the larger exemptions for pensioners, the allowance for interest and incomes from private pension plans, are meagre measures but ones well received and indeed desired by individuals. The removal of sales tax on heavy trucks and municipal water system materials and equipment will represent a degree of savings to our municipal governments which, with their limited tax base, are experiencing real financial difficulties.

We must ask ourselves this: how effective will these budget proposals really be? Does this budget do enough for business interests? Will the budget really cut into inflation, or will it even cool the inflationary expectations so prominent both internationally and domestically? In view of the government's past record and performance in this regard, I must say, Madam Speaker, that it is most difficult to share the minister's optimism. He indicates that he is striving to get the rate of inflation down below the double digit level. Hopefully, he is more adept at striving than the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is at wrestling.

It is obvious that, with the introduction of this budget, the government has chosen to continue its high wire dance rather than move ahead with any real authority in order to cope with record high inflation and the increasing cost of goods and services. We acknowledge the fact that inflation is present internationally, and that we are somewhat limited in this area. We are limited in our ability to control the cost of imported goods, but we also should be prepared to acknowledge that a larger inflation percentage than perhaps the minister is willing to admit is related to our own domestic situation in connection with goods and services.

The decision rests in the hands of the minister. He has chosen again not to act, and Canadians and Canadian businessmen are forced to tread water until some time in