

*Supply*

If people were given the right to have input into a budget, it would be more readily acceptable. They would be aware of possible contents. For a country like Canada that is important. As far as I am concerned, Canada is the only country made up of five distinct geographic regions. When taxation or fiscal measures are brought down in a budget we should realize that those measures will not affect each geographic region in the same way. On that basis, it should be important for the government to give a signal to the country through all of its regions of what the government proposes to do in terms of budget changes. If that kind of a system were adopted, and once laws were passed, people would have more faith and trust in the changes. People would not feel set upon by a government. They would not be as frightened or alienated by a government because they would have had input into the budgetary process. This is very important because governments today, in one form or another, take a very large percentage of income from us.

For instance, if one were to look at the average taxes paid by an individual Canadian, most of us end up working from the beginning of the year until some time in June for one government or another, which is a tremendous amount of taxation imposed on individuals by governments. Therefore, on that basis it is very important that individual taxpayers have as much input into the budgetary process as possible. That conclusion was evident to the committee of our party on which I served as we travelled the country during the first few weeks of 1982. Three themes kept recurring.

First, taxpayers in general could not understand why governments did not trust them and why governments did not discuss with the people what was going to happen. This viewpoint was particularly brought out with respect to the budget of November 12, 1981, which proposed a major taxation change.

The second theme which cropped up in the hearings concerned the fact that many of the taxation measures of the last budget were put into effect retroactively. That was unfortunate. It called into question the very basis under which our taxation system has worked in this country. It has worked on the basis of voluntary compliance. If the government ever gets itself into a position whereby it changes the rules, as it has done in some cases, particularly having to do with life insurance in the last budget where retroactive changes were made, it will find that that type of move makes Canadians think that they do not necessarily want to play square with the government. Several people told us that if the government cannot respect laws it puts in place upon which people plan for their retirement, these people naturally feel they want to retaliate, and when the time comes to fill out taxation forms, they consider the possibility of devising their own forms. Those kinds of things were very disturbing to hear.

The third theme that kept cropping up before our budgetary committee was the fact that many provisions in the budget have not been clarified. That was in January, two months after the budget had been brought down. Since then two more months have passed and still many provisions have not been

clarified. People do not know how to conduct their business affairs based on the November 12 budget because the government has not come forward with many of the changes in terms of legislation or regulation proposed in that budget. For instance, let us consider the change in the Excise Tax Act from the manufacturing to the wholesale level. There are many changes about which people are not yet familiar because the government has not fully established what it intends to do. Those are three areas that we need to address in terms of the budgetary process.

We need more input in the pre-budgetary process. I am not so sure there needs to be the total secrecy required now around the budget presentation itself. After the budget is brought down, the government should make every effort it possibly can to clarify what it intends to do with respect to tax changes proposed in the budget.

I intend to fulfil, at least in spirit, the suggestion made earlier by several members, namely to limit the time we take to make speeches in the House.

I want to close by referring to a couple of things the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said. This week in Toronto, he said:

—the way in which democracy was destroyed was closing down Parliament—

I want to suggest there is more than one way to close down Parliament. Simply because we are here does not mean that Parliament is working the way it should. In many ways there is a much more insidious way to close down Parliament; that is to have members here and have them do nothing. But I would challenge the Prime Minister. If he is serious at all in his statement, he should look at ways to make Parliament function, to make it more useful and more productive for members of the House and, as a result, for the constituents we represent. So, if Parliament closes down simply because it becomes irrelevant, the statement made by the Prime Minister is reprehensible. I would challenge him to see that Parliament is not closed down in terms of its ability to function. To me that is a lot more important than simply worrying about having people physically here. I would much sooner have people here doing something constructive rather than going on in the system we have now where, it seems to me, we become more and more irrelevant all the time.

The other point I would like to make has to do with what was said in the last page of the Speech from the Throne delivered here almost two years ago. It says:

● (2020)

Like all of your colleagues in the House of Commons, you who represent the people of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia—

And I can add to that the people of rural Manitoba where I come from:

—have a responsibility to represent your constituents to the nation. You also have an extra responsibility in the present circumstances to represent the nation to your constituents. It is a task no one else can fulfil.

I totally agree with that statement. If we are to fulfil that task, then we have to see that this institution functions in such a way that we can fulfil that task. Believe me, all those who