

The Budget—Mr. Benidickson

objection, when we were sitting on the government side of the chamber, when the opposition financial critic of those days invariably endeavoured to give to the house in his first speech some of the editorial comment that appeared in Canadian newspapers after presentation of a budget.

Of course on those occasions there was usually a sufficient lapse of time between budget night and the speech of the first opposition critic so that he was able to quote quite a number of editorials. As I say, we never objected to newspaper comments then. Many comments were quoted from the newspapers from coast to coast. Because of the one day interval of time which has elapsed between the presentation of the budget and today, it is not possible for me to do that nationally. I want to say at once, however, that the leader of the house was good enough, in view of the fact that we are coming to the end of our session and this budget presentation was very late, to ask me if I was prepared to go on this morning, and I agreed.

However, I am not going to follow to any extent the practice that used to be invariable in connection with criticism of the budget at this stage when the members of the present government were sitting on this side of the chamber. I am simply suggesting to all hon. members that it would be interesting to examine the lead article in today's *Montreal Financial Times*. I am not going to quote from it; I am only going to refer to six words in the headline.

"The budget was not worth delay."

I said, Mr. Speaker, I would not refer to the contents of this article because of the rules, but I do want hon. members on their own initiative to read the last two paragraphs of this comment in connection with the budget.

An hon. Member: How about some of your own ideas?

Mr. Benidickson: I am prepared to give them in due course.

An hon. Member: Let us have them.

Mr. Benidickson: Out of politeness, courtesy and the rules of the house I will not read the last two paragraphs of this article. My comment, instead of reading these last two paragraphs, which will be of interest to hon. members when they receive this publication, as I believe all hon. members do in their mail boxes, is to say in my own words that I felt there was much in the budget the other night that was unnecessary verbiage and could be described pretty generally as rhetorical ballyhoo.

[Mr. Benidickson.]

The Minister of Finance rather regularly has been misleadingly optimistic to this house. He certainly was so in his budget presentation last year, when he estimated a \$12 million surplus and to his disappointment, and to the disappointment of the country, we ended up with a very substantial deficit. Now, again we have an addition to this mountain of debt, and the government are always prepared to explain this by saying that it had been properly planned from the beginning. Indeed, again in the budget speech the other night the Minister of Finance, following this style, said:

In the circumstances confronting Canada today, it is "appropriate"—

That is a word the minister invariably uses. He used it in the national television press conference program last night to answer a great many questions, even in the negative. It was suggested by the press that certain things he was doing today were inconsistent with what he said he could not do a year ago. The minister said they were inappropriate then but were obviously appropriate now; but no proof or evidence was given as to what happened in the 12 intervening months. The minister said in his budget speech:

—it is appropriate, indeed desirable, that the federal government should, by incurring a sizeable deficit, help to stimulate the economy. This we propose to do. Accordingly, I shall not be introducing any increase in our general level of taxation.

He took great pride in that. Then he said: Indeed, I shall be proposing some significant—

That is another word that the Minister of Finance uses very regularly, but which I think was scarcely fitting to the context of his speech of two hours and 20 minutes the other night:

Indeed, I shall be proposing some significant tax reductions to accomplish certain specific economic objectives.

The house heard previously his inclusion of the word "today". Presumably these economic objectives were the best estimates he could provide to this country as of today. I continue to quote one of the minister's initial statements:

This contribution in the field of fiscal policy taken together with the financial and other policy measures which have already been introduced or which I shall be announcing tonight, will bring about higher levels of production—

Hon. members know how his voice can roll when he says such words as:

—higher levels of production and employment, and a more satisfactory rate of growth.

Mr. Speaker, our contention is that this budget again was not planned. The administration attempts to say it was planned, but I say the plans had been concluded months and months ago and were largely based on