

The Budget—Mr. Parent

I had occasion to visit Brock, and from the Tower the view of St. Catharines is breathtaking. The theatre is alive and well at Brock. We have a symphony orchestra which is the envy of southern Ontario. Athletics compliment the academic flavour and the two live side by side, encouraging physical fitness and scholastic excellence. Our prowess in lacrosse is legendary.

In 1970 we hosted the world rowing championships. Our Royal Henley course is the finest natural rowing course in Eastern Canada. Each year over 3,000 young men and young women use these facilities and we are now fielding crews who are competitive internationally. It should be noted that crews from all over the North American continent compete yearly at the Royal Henley.

It is incumbent upon me, Mr. Speaker, to see to it that the views and the opinions, as well as the problems of the citizens of St. Catharines, are articulated in the national councils of government. Conversely, it is my responsibility to ensure that our people are kept informed of the development in the House of Commons. To this end, I have inaugurated a plan whereby I can report directly to my constituents by radio via talk shows and interviews, by newspaper, and by sending out at least four newsletters per year.

It is my duty to communicate with the inhabitants of St. Catharines by attending the various cultural and organizational functions which take place. It is my pleasure to trumpet the achievements and accomplishments of our city and its citizens.

In order to be conversant with the legislation and regulations which affect our citizens in St. Catharines, I have asked for and been appointed to the following important standing committees of the House of Commons—Labour, Manpower and Immigration, and Veterans Affairs.

Since the House opened on September 30 the Standing Committee on Labour was instrumental in settling the West Coast grainhandlers' dispute, the sub-committee on manpower has presented legislation for parliament's consideration, and the sub-committee on immigration has moved to make our immigration policy flexible enough to admit over 200,000 immigrants each year while also permitting us to select those people who have specific talents which are in short supply in Canada. On November 6 the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs updated the Veterans Act to make it an instrument more responsible to the needs of our veterans.

The budget that parliament is debating is, in its approach to the country's economic problems, one of the most important in many years. To describe it as a re-run of the May 6 production with new sub-titles hardly does it justice. The Minister of Finance has reworked it from his earlier presentation by ameliorating the crunch of the oil and gas industry and by lessening the confrontation between Ottawa and Edmonton over resource revenues.

Most important, however, he reworked it in light of domestic and world economic conditions and prospects that have changed since May 6. He reworked it against a backdrop of recession fears in the United States, Japan and Europe, where Canada sells most of its exports. As a result the budget is a careful selection of policies which, in

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large measure, are designed to soften the impact of declining foreign demand for Canadian goods and services.

After a government is elected with a solid majority, as this government was last July, one would normally expect tax increases and government spending programs reflecting election promises. Instead it has proposed to reduce taxes, to curb government spending and to implement election promises only when they contribute to the objective of strengthening the country's ability to withstand economic assault, be it inflation or recession.

This is sound economics. Many persons have been advocating government economy and tax cuts for the last two years and more, the latter particularly so that people would have more take-home pay in order that they could buy more and thus create incentive for industry to hire unemployed workers. Now it has been concluded that the time is opportune for this approach, so the domestic market can take up any incipient slack, or part thereof, in the country's industrial infrastructure.

The Minister of Finance was not unduly pessimistic last Monday evening. He mentioned the word recession only twice; once a nod to the risk, and later a reference to the gathering forces of recession throughout the world. But he admitted that the outlook for the Canadian economy is less bright than in May, that signs of slowing down have appeared, and that tariff protectionism and payments problems abroad are causing weakness in foreign demand for our exports. In proposing tax cuts, he said there is need to sustain the growth of purchasing power over the period ahead.

I note that it is six o'clock, Mr. Speaker. I could finish my comments after the break. I require about a minute and a half more.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I suggest that we extend the time enough that the hon. member might finish his speech, and then enjoy his dinner with his family.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): The House has heard the suggestion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Parent: I thank my colleagues, Mr. Speaker. The budget gets rid of some of the aggravations of tax returns, as by limited exemption of interest and pension income from taxation. It is also strongly humanitarian, as when it proposes limited tax exemption of private pensions, transfer of tax credits to spouses, aid for those who want but cannot afford houses, and more aid for the handicapped. These proposals tend to cut the ground out from under those who argue that our liberalism is spelled only with a capital L.

The proposal to put higher taxes on heavy cars makes sense when you consider the need to conserve domestic oil resources. So does the corporate surtax, and higher taxes on alcohol and tobacco. The costs of government are at an all time high, and rising under the influences of inflation and swollen equalization payments to the provinces.

I have been asked many times what my reaction is to being in the House of Commons. I must confess, Mr.