

*The Budget—Mr. Andras*

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member would permit me to ask him a short question to clarify his position? If the Chair is agreeable, I should ask the hon. member whether he is against the 25-cent a gallon excise tax or whether he is in favour of the maintenance of that excise tax provided it is transferred to the province of Quebec?

**Mr. Roy (Beauce):** Mr. Speaker, earlier I answered those questions from newsmen. I do not fear at all to express my opinion in the House. We are clearly and categorically against it and I thank the hon. member for allowing me another minute, as the increase from 7 cents to 25 cents on transportation fuels is an extremely important subject. We are fundamentally against it. However, I should like to know what the opposition intends to do and to propose, and whether they are prepared to discuss that tax? Of course, if it were to be changed, and it is not our responsibility, if the opposition agrees and intends to go on working in that direction if the government changes, we should have, of course, to ensure that the tax returns where it comes from, namely in the provinces, and it will be our responsibility.

[English]

**Hon. Robert K. Andras (Thunder Bay-Nipigon):** Mr. Speaker, I would be gratified if I thought I would get the same degree of attention from members in the House today as the previous speaker upon whose every word certain members were hanging, for reasons which, of course, escape some of us. I rather doubt that will happen. If it did, it would be for different reasons. But the mystery did not unfold. We really do not know where the hon. member and his party stand. I guess we will wait for that until later.

Even at the risk of giving up a little partisan turf in this debate, I must admit that I had been looking forward for the last couple of months with some hope and modest expectation to the budget. As a minister who has had responsibility for the Treasury Board and later for the board of economic development ministers, certainly I am aware of the developing problems over the last decade of controlling expenditures and having sufficient economic development in the country, which is the only way that expenditures of the government can be financed.

● (1630)

Especially as I was serving on the board of economic development ministers I became more and more convinced that the tools that were once developed by Keynes and by others, originally to rescue a world that was sunk in the morass of economic deprivation and moral despair, into which it was dragged by the famous or infamous excesses of Conservative orthodoxy in the thirties, and which later served this and other countries rather well during a period when economic progress was ever onward and upward, had finally outlived their usefulness, and we certainly needed something new and different.

I would say that if the Minister of Finance (Mr. Crosbie) had chosen to publish in his background papers to the budget the other night some of the details and figures of the record of

[Mr. Roy (Beauce).]

the last two or three years of the previous government, it would have been convincing evidence that at the time of its defeat last May that government was already on the way to keeping expenditures within the bounds set by the rate of inflation, added to the rate of real growth, below the GNP nominal growth rate. There is no doubt about that.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Andras:** Hon. members opposite can giggle over there, but if they look at the facts they will find that is true, and I am sure they would prefer to deal with truth than fancy.

Indeed, we were putting in place economic measures that I think were improving the economy. At any rate, unemployment rates had been receding during the past two years, and early in this year the inflation rate in Canada was at least three points below that of the United States.

Given our feeling, our conviction, that the correct economic measures to meet the new times were in place and working, my colleagues and I were somewhat distressed to see members of the present government, when seeking office, announce their set of notorious and, thank goodness, by now largely abandoned list of election promises. In that we saw an attempt by the Conservative government to grab power through the simple expediency of pushing past an electorate a platform specifically concocted to pass in its absurdity and in its irresponsibility all previous examples of folly perpetrated by the Tories or even, I think, of any other party that got elected in this country.

The election took place. We came back here. We waited for months and months and months and months for the new government to take office and get rolling. I certainly sighed with some relief, although with a considerable degree of concern about the cynicism inherent in his comments, when the Minister of Finance just stood up and said: "Of course, we accept the doctrine that nothing said by my party during the election campaign meant anything". As we listened to some of the other things they were saying we were rather glad that he went on to say, by implication, that any further senseless pronouncements by anybody, including the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark), his leader—anybody in the government—could equally be ignored.

We had some difficulty then over those months wondering what the new occupation of this new Conservative régime might be since it had abandoned all its promises in its platform enunciated during the election campaign. In any event, as I said, I came here the other evening to hear the Minister of Finance present a budget with some hope and some modest expectation. I can only say after hearing it and reading it over, and after looking at the documents, in most of my private sentiments I am bitterly disappointed.

Here is a government finally seizing the occasion in which to unveil its view, its 17-year long deliberation, about the Canadian economy in its first budget in 17 years, as the Minister of Finance told us the other night. This is a budget presenting to the expectant electorate of this country all the treasure of all its expertise and its experience and its hope about our national