

*The Budget—Mr. Benidickson*

**Mr. Bell (Carleton):** Most decidedly not. It is now clear that the voice is the voice of Kenora but the hand is the hand of Bonavista-Twillingate.

**Mr. Speaker:** Perhaps it would be a reasonable course to follow if I were to indicate that I feel there is an amendment in the document submitted by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River which can be accepted and upon which a debate on a question of principle can be founded. I refer to the last paragraph. I have my doubts about the recitation of argument and other matters which are properly the subject of debate.

If the house and the hon. member particularly concerned will permit me to reserve judgment on the amendment on the basis that there is here a substantive amendment in the last clause on page 6, which I shall accept resolving that the financial policies of the government do not deserve the confidence of this house, the debate will not then be prejudiced by proceeding on that basis.

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Erhart Regier (Burnaby-Coquitlam):** Since I am likely to be the last speaker before we go home for our recess, I should like to express the greetings of the season to each and every one of the members of this house and to hope that the New Year will be good to each of them and to all those they hold dear. That includes the minister, regardless of what I may have to say in the remarks which follow. At the conclusion of my comments I intend to move either an amendment to the motion or an amendment to the amendment—and the conclusion of my remarks will have to be in the New Year. At that time I hope to be in possession of Your Honour's decision on the point which has just been raised.

I was amazed by the attitude taken by the Liberals in this house with regard to the budget. In essence they have gone to great lengths to inform the country that the minister has been wrong in his predictions. But all of us, even the best of us, are apt to be wrongly advised, or to make mistakes, and I do not feel we ought to devote our energies to arguing about how wrong the minister has been in his predictions.

The rest of the Liberal presentation has in the main consisted of weeping and wailing. I have listened for a number of hours and I have heard not one constructive proposal put forward as to what ought to be done, excepting, obviously, that the Liberals ought to replace the Conservatives in office. This is hardly good enough, especially in the light of the fact that our major ills are the result of

Liberals in office without remedial action being taken by the Conservatives who replaced them.

I have to condemn the government for this lack of remedial action, because at election time they claimed that they had the answers to our economic ills. We are waiting, and all Canada is waiting, to hear those answers. I know that Canadians as a whole were horribly disappointed upon hearing the contents of the budget last night. I noted an improvement. I noted that the minister on behalf of the government admitted at long last that the government has a responsibility toward the economic welfare of the Canadian nation. I think it is a forward move when we get the Conservative government admitting that the role of government in today's world means that it must assume responsibility toward the economic health of the nation as a whole. However, this admission arrives a goodly number of years later than it ought to have arrived.

I regret very much indeed that the minister was unable to offer any indication of when we might expect an end to the recession which we are now experiencing. The hon. gentleman forecast only a continuation of the recession and if I understood him aright his prediction is that the recession is likely to be a long one, indeed. I had hoped he would be able to give us at least a limited number of reasons for anticipating an end to existing conditions.

I regretted that the minister was inclined to blame our recession on what is happening in Europe and the United States. Events in Europe have been of very recent origin, and if there is any slackening in economic activity in Europe it has been of such recent date that it can hardly be held responsible for the difficulties that we are encountering. The attitude of the minister and, I assume, the attitude of the government seems to be one of a decision to roll with the punch and not to undertake any radical or severe measures to deal with the situation. The attitude seems to be: Let us roll with the punch and eventually everything is going to turn out well and we shall end up on top. The government is obviously afraid to tackle the problems facing us with imagination and vigour.

While admitting its responsibility for the economic health of our nation the government refuses to implement that responsibility. Where is the broad attack on our problems we have heard so much about in the boastings on the part of ministers of the government? They have held conferences galore. They have asked for advice from all parts of the nation and from all interests and I know they have received plenty of advice. However, we are anxiously asking where is the action? Where

[Mr. Pickersgill.]