

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Clark: The measures introduced by this budget are extremely harmful, that we know. What makes it even worse is that the budget is based on principles that are disastrous for the future of this country. With this budget, the government is making a profound change in the nature and orientation of Canada. As a rule, Canadians are not hostile to government. They understand that there is a need for reasonable regulations, for fair and just taxation, for protecting the environment and for creating social programs for the handicapped and those who are unable to work. Now, however, the Canadian people have a government that is so eager to extend its influence and control that it has gone completely overboard. The mandarins at the Department of Finance have got their way at last. They now have a Minister of Finance who is so oblivious to the real world he did not even ask the basic questions: what will be the impact of the budget on the average person? What will be the impact of the budget on personal initiative? How will the budget affect investment? What will it do to encourage people to save for the future? What will it do to further justice and equity? What will it do to make Canadians feel their government knows what it is doing?

When the budget was brought down, obviously the members on the opposite side did not ask those questions. Instead, they relied on experts, the same experts who are helping the government to concentrate economic and political power in Ottawa, away from the provinces and from the Canadian people. This unhealthy urge to centralize power was visible in the constitutional proposal and in the energy pricing agreement, and is now surfacing again in the budget.

[*English*]

The condemnation of the budget by Canadians in all walks of life and in all parts of the country is unanimous and is scathing. Perhaps the minister has not heard from the same people which our budget committee heard from over the past three weeks, so I thought I might give him a sample or a taste of what Canadians think of his budget. From Charlottetown:

Today's government seems to have a complete lack of understanding and concern for the role of the business sector in our economy.

From Winnipeg:

The budget does not soak the rich but harms the poor.

From Vancouver:

British Columbia has gone from a prospect of high growth to one of high unemployment in one year.

From the National Union of Provincial Government Employees:

That budget was no damn good and it should be thrown out and we should start again.

Supply

From Toronto, a citizen standing and asking plaintively:

Why should I save for my old age? I'll spend it all now and let the government take care of me.

From the Canadian High Technology Association:

They're not backing winners . . . they're bleeding winners.

From home builders:

They've already got us down and now they've stomping with hobnailed boots.

The quotations go on and on from the story of agony of individual Canadians, the story of outrage of people who feel betrayed. I notice some Liberal Members of Parliament on the other side of the House smiling. I am convinced that if they were at home listening to their constituents over this past Christmas period, they would have heard the same kind of testimony from individual Canadians who are being damaged by the budget.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: The test for them will be whether they will put the interests of their constituents ahead of the interests of their party. When these matters come up for voting in the House, or when the matter comes up for voting today, the test will be whether they will put the political future of the Minister of Finance ahead of the economic future of the country and the individual well-being of countless Canadians. We have heard from some of those members. I almost hesitate to quote one of them, the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis), who indicated that he knew of at least a dozen government Members of Parliament who will "sure as hell" criticize the government's economic decisions. The hon. member for Hull (Mr. Isabelle) said:

I've been in politics 17 years and I've never seen people so mad about a budget.

The hon. member for Cochrane-Superior (Mr. Penner) said:

It is not a happy situation and we're in deep trouble. Our economic policies just aren't working. The interest rates are just loansharking with an official sanction.

The hon. member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan (Mr. McRae) said:

I think we should throw the basic part of this budget out.

I presume he was speaking of the Minister of Finance. The test for those members and for other Liberal members will be whether they put their votes where their mouths are, whether they are prepared to put the interests of their people ahead of the interests of their party, when this question comes to a vote tonight, and if the motion is defeated today, when budget measures come to a vote later on.

We are dealing with not simply a question of a budget which is the worst budget brought in in the history of the country in terms of its impact upon ordinary Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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