

The Budget—Mr. Blais

Mr. Blais: We can talk about the Arrow if the hon. member wants to talk about something for which John Diefenbaker was responsible.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blais: When we are talking about the Canadarm, it is an expression of Canada's potential in the area of high technology. We accept that. I was in France recently and they said how great they were because they had the potential of establishing a satellite telecommunications network for France, that they were one of the first countries in the world to do that. I said, "My God, we have been in the telecommunications game in this country for close to 20 years". We can show the French, we can show the British and we can show the Americans the level of our own technology. We have to take a back seat to no one. Recently I was involved in the Telidon development, again a Canadian piece of technology which is at the leading edge of the videotext industry. Canadians are immensely proud of that. I could go through a whole list ranging from MacDonald-Dettwiler in Vancouver, British Columbia, to Northwest Industries Ltd. in Alberta, to Bristol Aerospace in Winnipeg, to de Havilland in Ontario, to Canadair or Pratt & Whitney in Montreal, to Mitel in Buctouche, or to Hermes Electronics in Nova Scotia. Throughout the whole country there is a tremendous high technology potential. Hon. members opposite will ask what I know about it. I know a lot about it because I have contracts with those fellows and I use my \$3.2 billion per year to ensure that the capacity is in place.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blais: That capacity is in place. We are able to use it and we are able to develop it. I do not care what the opposition moans and groans, dooms and glooms about. This country has the world by the tail and we know it.

When we consider all the investments which have to be made in the next generation, in the next 20 years, we know that there is no size of any government budget that is able to spend the money to provoke those investments, each and every one of them. There must be an economic state in the country which provides price stability in order to boost investor confidence. The opposition recognizes that hon. members of the opposition have said that we must bring down inflation and interest rates, that we must restrict our spending. We have done that responsibly. We have removed a necessity in the Canadian marketplace. We have made available in the next fiscal year more than \$4 billion to private investors in order to bring down the rate of interest, to bring down inflation and to create stability. That is the only way we will be able to take advantage of that immense potential.

There is absolutely no assistance from members of the opposition who cite partial statistics, who try to mislead the House—undoubtedly unintentionally because they do not know what they are doing in the first place—in terms of the arguments they present in order to provoke confrontation. The country does not need confrontation. The country needs co-operation. The government has been aiming at co-operation

with the agreement on energy prices which we signed with the three western provinces, and in terms of negotiating a constitutional arrangement which will provide for the first time in our history our own made-in-Canada Constitution, approved by Canadians. This is the sort of fearless leadership we are providing to the people of Canada. This is why I commend the budget to the House and I commend the Minister of Finance for his wisdom and perspicacity.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I have just listened to a Liberal cabinet minister bragging about the budget of the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) at a time when public confidence in the government is at its lowest level in 20 years of our history. I should like to ask the minister where he spends his time.

● (2130)

Is he locked up in his cabinet office and does he not get out in public where he can hear the comments the people are making? I cannot remember a time, in the some 25 years I have been around this institution in one position or another, when a budget has been so universally panned. Economists, pundits, editorialists, labour leaders, the business community large and small, all received it with rage, ridicule or both. It is the business of these groups to analyse this misbegotten offspring of a finance minister's delusion, of course, and to expose its weaknesses.

Their criticism is not surprising. What is surprising is the near-unanimous reaction of hundreds of thousands of Canadians in every part of this great country who have treated this budget with similar anger and scorn—anger at the con job that the Minister of Finance tried to perpetrate on them by pretending to offer them something when he did not. They saw through his dishonesty, his deceit and his cupidity. There was scorn on the part of Canadians for a minister who so underestimated their intelligence that he thought he could get away with his efforts at deception. The Canadian people are not as gullible as the minister's own backbenchers.

How I would love to see the Minister of Finance take that budget into an election campaign. Even his toadying backbenchers, who support it publicly but criticize it privately, would run away from it.

The tragedy of this budget with all its take and no give approach, is that it comes at a time when the country is in the grip of a severe recession. The Minister of Finance and his seatmate are old enough to remember the searing effects of the Great Depression, although the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was isolated from it all by a cocoon of wealth in the higher reaches of Outremont, an isolation he has steadfastly maintained throughout his lifetime. Should they remember the 1930s they will know of the anguish and hardship and worry that haunted people's lives. Today's recession, and we see it all around us, is beginning to resurrect these fears and uncertainties of that earlier era.