

The Budget—Mr. Trudeau

least possible position acceptable to the forces and Canadians in general is for the Prime Minister to indicate the posture he would like to see them adopt with regard to our four priorities and to our role in the world today. That is the least the Prime Minister owes to the Canadian armed forces.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Chair would like some direction from the House with regard to the order adopted on November 21 setting a limit of 20 minutes on speeches of hon. members. I know that under Standing Order 60 there is no time limit. I wish to be sure of this order now, rather than have someone interrupt the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) after 20 minutes. I would like to be sure that he has unlimited time according to Standing Order 60(9). Is this agreed?

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, we completely agree that despite the terms of the order the Prime Minister should have more than 20 minutes. That is proper, not only because he is Prime Minister but because he will need additional time to deal with these issues.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I trust the Prime Minister is not worried lest I disagree. The fact is that we agree but, as one of my colleagues says, we hope the Prime Minister will have something to say. We hope he will not follow the rule religiously and speak for unlimited time. We hope he can present his case within an hour.

● (1600)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the House leader of the Conservative Party for agreeing that I not be limited by the 20-minute rule. I shall take some time to deal with the subject which the hon. member for Annapolis Valley (Mr. Nowlan) yesterday asked the then Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Sharp) to make sure I would deal with. That will take up a substantial part of my speech. To the House leader of the New Democratic Party I would say that I want to deal with the questions asked of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) by him, questions relating to petroleum in general. This will take some time. The only thing I can tell the House leader of the New Democratic Party is that I shall not imitate the sixteenth century divine who exhausted time and encroached upon eternity.

[*Translation*]

This year, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in the Canadian history, we have witnessed in an unprecedented way the formidable power of Parliament, with its right to question the budgetary policy of the government. Its refusal of our budget, six months ago, had consequences which caused us to realize more fully the implications of parliamentary democracy.

While I still hold that the recent general election which resulted was both inopportune and useless, except from a constitutional point of view, I remain convinced that the concretizing of the official terms and conditions of our constitution in the supremacy of Parliament and the dependency of the government on the support of the people, has been beneficial not only to Canada, but also to each and every one of us.

[Mr. Forrestall.]

Modesty forbids me to elaborate unduly on the collective decision of the electorate, while my inborn kindness prevents me from emphasizing what the Canadian people thought of the arguments on which hon. members of the opposition based their rejection of our budget.

I need only say, Mr. Speaker, that the Liberal party is now on this side of the House, to your right, that it is presenting a new budget, that it has a few more members and that its members are a little more confident about the results of the vote to be held later.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, many things have changed since May. Only one has remained and will remain the same: the resolve of the government to listen attentively to the concerns and problems of the people who elected it to serve them, and to bring effective solutions to all those difficulties.

There is no doubt that the steady increase in the cost of living constitutes the main concern of most Canadians. We are well aware of that concern that prevails throughout the country. That feeling sometimes turns into powerless rage in the face of economic forces that spread such painful uncertainty among so many Canadian families. We have seen illustrations of that indignation with the recent livestock slaughters and the waste of millions of eggs—scandalous things to happen in a starving world. We still see that feeling in the quiet but deep concern of those workers and their families who could be overcome in their fight to maintain their economic position within the community.

We also find that concern among elder people abashed by the decrease in their purchasing power and who still feel its cruel effects.

Young couples who are disappointed at seeing fade away in an uncertain future their hope of owning their own house one day are also deeply concerned. And the concerned faces of small entrepreneurs and businessmen tired of explaining to their customers that they are not responsible for inflation, but rather its victims, tell us a lot about their state of mind.

We know that many parents are concerned not only about being able to provide decent food, clothing and shelter for their children but also about the economic stability of the world in which they will have to live their adult lives.

Threatened by inflationary forces he does not fully understand, but convinced that no government, no group of influence is entirely responsible for the problem nor able to solve it alone, the average Canadian seems to have adopted an ambivalent attitude.

On the one hand, he is increasingly inclined to look first and above all after his personal interest and those of his family. On the other hand, he is more aware than ever of the interdependence of individuals and nations, more prepared to co-operate and participate in a joint action against that common enemy that is economic instability.

People want a government that is alert and sensitive to their needs, a government that shows compassion for the vulnerable and the weak, a government that can come up with solutions to its most pressing problems.