

*The Budget—Mr. Nasserden*

the differences that exist between Canadians in one part of this country and those in another part, the primary objective of a government that is striving for unity should be to bring Canadians together on those things that they have in common. We believe that the place to do that is at the conference table with positive suggestions rather than negative ones and a questioning of the differences that exist between one part of our nation and the other.

However, we are dealing with the Budget on this occasion and particularly with the amendment which reads as follows:

—the policies of this government have failed to deal constructively and effectively with major national problems facing Canada which require action now to provide policies for adequate incentives to increase productivity, stimulate export trade, to meet the serious and increasing imbalance of international payments, to maintain price stability, and to promote orderly and equitable development and expansion in all areas in the nation.

● (5:20 p.m.)

I can understand that the members on the treasury benches do not want to talk about these things. All they have to do is look at the record of the last three years. If one looks at the Budget presented this session, one will realize that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) has had to back-track on almost every action taken by the former minister of finance.

On this occasion, on the eve of our centennial year, the Budget debate is of more than passing significance. The Throne Speech outlines a government's good intentions; the Budget measures its sincerity and its purpose. The debate on the Budget is a crucial one under our system of government. Our predecessors in parliamentary practice attached votes of confidence so that the Budget debate would not be an idle exercise. These votes have never been looked upon as an obstruction to orderly government. Indeed, the allocation of time for this purpose enshrined within our rules has compelled a more than passing consideration of the Budget.

This debate should therefore be one of the decisive instruments of our democratic system of government. One need not examine the Budget presented by the Minister of Finance for very long to establish that it lacks any positive purpose. Therefore, sir, it lacks the greatest quality required to make it an instrument to build this nation.

There is another quality regarding Budgets and the debate associated with them and that is that parliament must be ready to stake its

[Mr. Nasserden.]

life on the various votes which are taken in relation thereto. I can think back and remember the Budget which introduced the 11 per cent sales tax about three years ago. I need not remind this house or the country now the leader of the N.D.P. and the members of his group failed on that occasion to face that decision. Their failure to vote then allowed the 11 per cent sales tax to take effect and has resulted in the factors which have led to the inflation which exists today in our country.

Three years later I am wondering about that decision which has had the effect of providing anxiety and privation for those on fixed incomes and those on low incomes in this country. I thought then, sir, and I think today that that was an act of cowardice on the part of a political party in this parliament. I know that the leader of the N.D.P. and his followers say that they remained in their seats reluctantly. But they nevertheless allowed the 11 per cent sales tax to take effect and allowed this tax to become one of the factors which have destroyed the purchasing power of the Canadian dollar. We in the official opposition took a stand then which we still take today, namely, that a government so lacking in foresight and vision was unworthy of continuing in office.

We have since had further budget debates. We have had an election. The Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) so loved the prospect of a majority that he ignored the accumulated backlog of business before parliament and put the country to the expense of an election. It is interesting to realize that that was one of the times when the Liberals did not have the answers.

We in this parliament must now face the decision which should have been taken three years ago. The Minister of Finance and his colleagues, who have the answers, would not listen to reason during the last three years. The result has been the crises of 1966—tight money, inflation, the highest cost of living in the entire history of our nation—

**Mr. Sharp:** And the lowest unemployment.

**Mr. Nasserden:** —the deterioration of our balance of payments position, the highest consumer debt in Canadian history, costs spiralling day after day, and the tacit confession from the Minister of Finance that things will continue to spiral. Parliament faces the decision already delayed three years but now compelling in light of the events and conditions within the country. This nation must be