

The Budget—Mr. Groos

Once the winter navigation is made possible up to Montreal, Mr. Speaker, progress would not stop there. There would always be some technicians and scientists who would continue to try to find a method in order to extend winter navigation on the St. Lawrence and that is progress.

Therefore, I submit that point to the Minister of Finance and I hope that the Minister of Transport will take it under serious consideration. Unfortunately, there is not so many members from the Montreal area on whom I can rely for support in connection with that cause. I see the Postmaster General (Mr. Côté) and the hon. member for Outremont-Saint-Jean (Mr. Noël) and I ask them to exert pressure to make possible winter navigation on the St. Lawrence. Unfortunately, the others are not here; I also see the hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Mackasey), who could do his share in this respect.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope I have outlined the problem clearly and that everybody will understand now that as regards technology, finance, feasibility, nothing stands in the way of such an endeavour. All that remains now is the decision on the part of the Department of Transport, which will entail no extra expenditures.

[English]

Mr. D. W. Groos (Victoria (B.C.)): Mr. Speaker, may I begin by paying my personal tribute to my colleague the hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Mackasey) who spoke last night in this house and who, in my experience has been the strongest proponent of national unity both inside and outside the house, ever since I have had the honour to know him. I admire him for it and I believe every Canadian who has at heart one Canada can, in sincerity, honour him and those like him for their work in this direction.

As I believe hon. members know, I am not very politically oriented in this house, but I cannot let go unchallenged the remarks of the last speaker from the opposition who made reference to the support given by the members of my party to our leaders in this house. I should merely like to draw his attention to the fact that when his own leader spoke, upon introducing his motion of non-confidence in the government the other day, the first time he had made a major speech in this house, I took a personal count. I will not trust my figures, but will merely point out that the newspapers drew attention to the fact that there were never more than 45 of his own members sitting in the house at

the time he made this speech. I think these figures speak for themselves, and I will not dwell on this any longer.

Mr. Alkenbrack: How many are there over on your side now?

Mr. Groos: There are not very many over here while I am speaking, but it is pretty hard to compete with Santa Claus, who is arriving outside for the children's party.

I should like to refer to the speech made last night by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Benson) when he outlined in general terms the cut-backs and delays the government is proposing for the next financial year. I believe we all know that these will have to be made for the good of the country, because of the difficult financial conditions which exist in the country and in the world today, not all of which are of our own Canadian making. I accept that, although my riding will be affected as much as any other. I feel sure our people in Victoria will generally accept the cut-backs in the national interest and I will support the government in the measures they are taking.

There is one cut-back, however, which I simply deplore. It positively sickens me personally, at heart, to think that no money can be found for any federal superannuants, no matter how dire their circumstances may be. I must say here and now that I implore the minister and the government to take another look at their decision not to make any increase in the payments to superannuants next year. Surely there must be some way to help, if not all, at least those in most dire need. Let us at least do something for this group.

Last night I went to the parliamentary library to look up the steps which had been taken during the days when another government was having difficulty making its financial ends meet. You will notice, Mr. Speaker, the mixture of books I have before me. In reading through the parliamentary debates of 1932 I noticed what steps had been taken.

So far as I can make out the civil servants of those days—and they comprise most of the superannuants of today—were not given a salary cut in those terms but, by the Salary Reduction Act, were required to make what was called at that time “a contribution to the welfare of Canada” of 10 per cent of their salaries across the board. It was reduced to 5 per cent for those who earned less than \$1,200 a year. At the same time statutory increases were frozen. When this legislation