

The Budget—Mr. Stevens

In short, we are in a very serious economic position which is not being dealt with in a prudent way by the government.

I mentioned my feeling that we have only received half a budget. The tax increases are yet to come, and let there be no doubt about that fact because it is just a question of form. What we have received so far is the energy aspect. I suggest that the reason energy has been singled out in the budget, and in the document entitled "The National Energy Program" is because the government feels that this field is an easy target. It looks upon the oil industry as predominantly foreign, as very profitable and as an industry which is mainly located in one province which represents only 10 per cent of the population of the country. In the thinking of this government, that industry is a fair target because it can arouse public opinion against that industry.

I hope that those people who read the budget and say, "Well, at least they didn't tax us too heavily," and those in industry who say, "Well, it's not hitting me, so somehow or other I am not concerned", do not smile too broadly, because I can assure them their time is coming should this government continue in office beyond its present mandate. The government intends to intervene, to socialize, to take over, to cannibalize, to Canadianize, to nationalize, call it what you want, until the Canadian public finally does what happened in Jamaica, Britain, and what will happen tomorrow in the United States, turn out the big spenders and bring in responsible government once again.

Approximately a week ago I attended a seminar in this city which dealt with public corporations. Various comments were made to rationalize the government's position on Crown corporations. The speaker just ahead of me made the comment that when the government wants to take over parts of the private sector, and the private sector resists because it does not want to be taken out, it should be remembered that the government has some very effective tools at its disposal. It can regulate the industry and it can bring in onerous taxation to sober it up. In short, the government can bring the industry to its knees so that it is willing to be bought out.

To show how much the government has accepted this theory, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) states at page 52 in "The National Energy Program":

The Government of Canada recognizes that the National Energy Program represents a fundamental departure, in many instances, from the current policy environment. Despite the fact that the policies will maintain, even enhance the relative position of the oil and gas industry, some firms may regard the new conditions as unsatisfactory. The government's acquisition program provides an answer for them. The Government of Canada is a willing buyer at fair and reasonable prices.

I thought that godfathers existed only in the United States, but clearly we have a godfather in the form of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Is that not contemptible? Did anyone ever think that in Canada we would reach the position where the government, which is supposed to be the servant of the people, rather than trying to respond to criticism would say, "If you don't like it we are going to buy you out on", presumably, "fair terms." I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that

with the power the government possesses, those terms would be virtually confiscation.

● (1550)

I mention this because I believe that if we in this House do not stand up and be counted, starting tonight, to show our distaste for this type of budgetary presentation, this type of spending, this type of deficit, this high infrastructure that will lead to greater unemployment in the country and unsatisfactory real growth in the economy, we will not have done our duty as representatives of our constituents.

I have spoken of some of the ways the government has deceived the people in this budget. Perhaps the worst deceit of all is the suggestion made during the election campaign that the government would control expenditures to the level of economic growth in the country. What is meant by that is not what you and I would mean, Mr. Speaker, that if the economy increases by 9 per cent this year we would try to keep spending down to 9 per cent instead of the 15 per cent the government project. The government means it will be kept to the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please.

Mr. Stevens:—you lose before 1984.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I want to say how much I enjoyed the remarks made by the hon. member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens). It is nice that we are able to see the full epitome of the real Tory finally speaking up in this House. During question period we were treated to the exhibition of that sham Tory who shed great crocodile tears about the plight of the poor. He charged that this government was ignoring them and had not provided enough money in the budget to deal with the problems of those on low income. Now, however, we have the real voice of the Tory party speaking—no money for the poor—cut back—end the deficits. That is the pristine pure voice of the niggardly mean-minded sort of Tory who says, "No money for anybody; let's cut back."

I enjoyed that, Mr. Speaker. I think it was useful to have that point of view expressed in this House—no more sham, no more charade, none of the posturing for the cameras. The hon. member has once again lived up to his reputation of being the true voice of the hard rockbed of Canadian Conservatism which holds, basically, that government should do nothing at all.

On this side of the House we appreciate all this, Mr. Speaker, because it shows what the differences are between us. I just wish, however, that the hon. member had been a little more accurate with some of the facts he put on record. I know that when he was a minister of the Crown he did not want to be confused by facts, but I would have thought that these past months in opposition would have changed his behaviour. Having occupied a cabinet post, I should have thought he