

The Budget—Hon. John N. Turner

withering of good will in society, the growing of despair and a recession of the spirit as it has been called. This recession of the spirit can come to Canada. There is no inherent reason why it should, but it could very well come here. I urge the government to not only think about crises but about opportunities that exist in the hearts and minds of people and their desire to serve society. Opportunities for the aged will go a long way toward achieving this goal.

• (1800)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): The hour set aside for private members' business having expired, I do now leave the chair until 8 o'clock, when the Minister of Finance will submit a ways and means motion to the House.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

[English]

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance) moved:

That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

He said:

Mr. Speaker, my first words to this House as Minister of Finance last February were that my most urgent priority was jobs. This remains my first priority. No economy is working as well as it should if there are men and women in this country seeking work who cannot find it. The search for jobs is a human problem. The main thrust of this budget is to deal with this problem; to buttress the Canadian economy—to provide incentives for Canadian industry to grow and compete and provide jobs.

The only realistic solution for matching the tremendous yearly increase in our work force, which will continue at the present rate for the next several years, is greater growth in the economy. It is growth that will create jobs. I mean growth in the private sector. I mean real jobs, not temporary jobs. I mean jobs that last and satisfy. I believe that we have to look to expansion of Canadian industry and the commitment of business to provide those jobs.

What makes it important to take stock of our position now is the fact that the world is caught up in the midst of far-reaching changes, the outcome of which is not easy to predict. The already rapid rate of advances in technology continues to accelerate, bringing about vast changes in our lives, in our way of producing goods, and in our way of doing business. Multinational corporate giants have to come to assume an increasingly dominant role on the

[Mr. Kaplan.]

world economic state and in the Canadian economy. I fear that the world is in the process of being transformed into massive trading blocs, which in itself is of immense significance to Canada as a major trading nation. Moreover, the relative competitive position of the various nations is also undergoing a pronounced change. This was the hard fact that lay behind the international monetary crisis which came to a head last summer when the United States adopted a series of measures to halt the deterioration in its own competitive position.

Because all of these developments have far-reaching implications for the future of our own country, it is only sensible and realistic for us to take a new look at our situation and to consider what policies will best serve our long-term interests.

What I shall strive to do tonight is to set the stage for Canadian industry to be competitive in world markets. Our ability to gain access to world markets is a prerequisite to the success of any industrial policy that focuses on growth and jobs.

I am hoping to achieve industrial growth at a pace that will not aggravate the inflationary impulses in the economy and escalate the cost of living. This government is committed to reasonable price stability. I am committed tonight to propose ways to render justice to those people in our community who have been hurt by the rise in the cost of living and who have no way of fighting back. I am speaking of those Canadians who have retired, whose working days are over, and of our veterans and their dependants.

• (2010)

I said once before to this House that a Minister of Finance is not an economic czar. It is true that through its fiscal policies the federal government can and must play a central role in guiding the course of the economy. It is important to understand, however, that there are some very real constraints on the ability of the federal government alone to ensure that the economy remains precisely on course at all times.

The policies and programs of the provinces and municipalities have a major impact on the economy, their combined revenues and expenditures now significantly exceeding those of the federal government. Then, too, in our free enterprise system the way in which our economy moves is determined in a fundamental way by the day-to-day decisions taken in the market-place by millions of Canadians. Of course, our economy is also strongly influenced by forces from abroad. The difficulty of anticipating and responding to the impact on the economy of all these forces is further compounded by the universal limitation of economic information. For all these reasons, it makes good sense for the government to stand ready to make periodic adjustments in its fiscal policies as the need for them becomes evident.

[Translation]

But there are also occasions when budgets must have a broader perspective and look further into the future. There are times when they must deal with more fundamental and longer-term problems related to the structure of the economy itself. In my budget tonight, Mr. Speaker, I shall propose an important revision in our fiscal system