

The Budget—Mr. A. Lambert

[*Editor's Note: For text of above report, see today's Votes and Proceedings*]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, the amendment thereto of Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West) (p. 2178) and the amendment to the amendment of Mr. Saltsman (p. 2182)

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, even though the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) is not in the House at the moment, I wish however to commend him for the courage he displayed in his budget statement. I must say that had it not been for his eloquence, the budgetary statement would certainly have been very dull, since it was likely to increase the burden of the individual rather significantly for the benefit of large corporations.

Having said this, Mr. Speaker, I should like to analyze objectively some aspects of the budget brought down by the Minister of Finance in order to show that it certainly contains some good things but that one also finds in it some things that need improvement.

Mr. Béchard: But there are some good things.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): The hon. member for Bonaventure has been making it his practice for some time of interjecting remarks during our speeches. I commend him for so doing, because, after all, this is a good opportunity to convey a few good ideas.

Mr. Béchard: I thank the hon. member for giving me this opportunity.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I shall go on with my speech and say that the increase in the estimates for 1972-73, under the heading of direct personal income tax, will be about \$1,125 million, which will contribute to reduce the purchasing power of workers, prevent the purchase of many products, lower consumption and indirectly increase the number of unemployed in Canada.

I am quite pleased to see that the Minister of Finance is very optimistic about a possible upturn in the number of jobs in Canada during next year. But I suggest that if we do not bring any change to the way we finance public expenditures, there will be an increase in our national production, that is to say the economic growth, but there will also be an increase in the number of unemployed. This is what happened during the past few years. In view of the formula we are using now, the same will undoubtedly happen during the next 12 months.

Mr. Speaker, here is one of the good steps announced in the budget speech: the increase in the guaranteed income supplement. But then, a problem arises: we have read in

[Mr. Forget.]

papers recently that the Quebec minister of Social Affairs complained about the intrusion of the federal government into an area which he considers as falling only under provincial jurisdiction and that the \$15 increase in the guaranteed income supplement will contribute to create problems to the Quebec government as regards people under 65.

Therefore, if the same kind of administration is maintained, it is certain that in the case of persons who are at the present time receiving welfare allowances and who are living with a spouse who is receiving the old age security pension and the guaranteed income supplement the spouse's pension will be decreased accordingly. This means that their total purchasing power will not increase in the desired proportion. It is a weakness in our administrative system which we should hasten to correct so that we may fulfill the purposes of the acts which are passed, that is to ensure a decent income to the people in need.

Even yesterday, some people came to meet their elected representative and explain to him their problems in connection with the old age security pension. This is why I strongly support the principles which the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) advocated last week when he rose to take part in the debate on the budget. Actually, he stated that it was urgent for the Canadian government to adopt an economic security policy and establish a guaranteed minimum income for all.

The events which are actually taking place in the world—and, more specifically in the province of Quebec where discontent is spreading from all quarters—prompt people to seek higher pay and security, in short, the right to live. They demand an increase in their income in line with the devaluation of the dollar.

I am satisfied of one thing, namely that if we adopted this policy it would help tremendously the government of the province of Quebec to settle the present conflict as quickly as possible, to stabilize the economy, to ensure social peace and security because this situation exists not only in Quebec but in all the other provinces.

Hon. members certainly received, like I did, a brief from the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities which asked the federal government to decentralize the revenue sources to the advantage of municipalities, so that they may have the revenues which are necessary to discharge their responsibilities.

In every field we try to obtain more in order to meet our own needs and to fulfill our obligations. The underlying problem is a financial one and the Minister of Finance recognized it in the speech he delivered last Monday; I quote:

—I wish I could do everything at once and I am sure that each member of this House, were he standing in my place, would have a long list of priorities of things he would want to change, of inequities he would want to cure—

So the fact that those things exist is recognized. I continue with my quotation:

The bare fact of the matter is that we cannot do everything at once. We simply don't have the resources.

Mr. Speaker, may I call it six o'clock?