

Mr. Crosbie last December brought in budgetary policies that were designed first of all to reduce the national debt and get government spending under control. This was not because we regarded a balanced budget as an end in itself, or because we have any doctrinaire objection to deficit spending, but because in our judgment the federal deficits we inherited and the \$8.6 billion that we were spending in annual interest charges were a drag on the economy.

During the last Parliament in this place, Senator Everett had some things to say about budgetary deficits. I will not associate him with Mr. Crosbie's budget, but I think most of us would associate ourselves with Senator Everett's statement of November 20 here, when he said:

I believe we have to control spending and eliminate deficits simply because deficit spending prevents us from employing the sound fiscal measures that will make our economy more efficient and more productive.

And after referring to various fiscal incentives for housing and oil exploration and the like, Senator Everett said:

The reason you control government spending, the reason you eliminate deficits, is to have the ability to bring into play those kinds of measures. If you are in a deficit situation, as we are today, you can only do so much, and the result is that you are precluded from doing many things that you should be doing.

I believe the former Prime Minister and the former Minister of Finance would associate themselves with those statements. Mr. Clark said in a speech a day or two after the budget was presented:

We see a lower deficit as absolutely essential to achieving our far more important goals of lower inflation and lower unemployment.

It is clear that the present government takes a far different view. During the election campaign Mr. Trudeau condemned the Progressive Conservative Government for what he described as our "obsession" with the deficit. The ambivalent reference to the deficit in the Speech from the Throne and the lack of any program to contain expenditures in Mr. MacEachen's speech the other night indicates that lowering the deficit is no longer an objective, much less a priority, of the Government of Canada.

Even in this house during this debate the Leader of the Government dismissed concerns about government spending by referring to them as "that old chestnut." The minister would do well to read or reread the admonitions of the Governor of the Bank of Canada on that very subject.

Well, there is room for argument on these matters, but as time goes on the stalling and the temporizing of the government and its inability to come to a decision will only add to Canada's problems.

In the words of Senator Lamontagne in the last session:

Such neglect can only be described as the Titanic approach to economic planning.

Senator Lamontagne nods his head in agreement. I am delighted to see that.

**Senator Lamontagne:** That was your approach.

**Senator Murray:** I am using his words to describe the approach of the present government, obviously. Senator Lamontagne went on:

We want the suspense to stop. We want this government to govern.

And so say we.

**Senator Asselin:** What is your answer?

**Senator Lamontagne:** Those are very good words.

**Senator Murray:** They are very good words and very apt at this time in our history. Nowhere is the need more urgent than to clear up the confusion about government policy and to bring in solutions than in the field of energy policy.

● (1530)

In 1973 the Prime Minister of Canada committed his government to self-sufficiency in oil and oil products for the end of the 1970s. In 1976 the target was reduced to "self-reliance", and the present Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources without elaboration told us that the difference between self-reliance and self-sufficiency was "subtle but real".

During the election campaign, Mr. Trudeau again attacked our "obsession" with self-sufficiency. The Minister of State for Economic Development, on March 20, said:

Canada must speed up its objective of oil sufficiency. It can and must be done before 1990.

That statement has, for all practical purposes, been disavowed by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in the other place.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources made a speech in the other place a few days ago about energy policy. It is one that the Minister of State for Economic Development, and Senator Austin, who made a speech in this place last session about energy policy, should read, because I challenge them to find in that speech an energy policy that this country can understand, much less live with.

We now have the unedifying spectacle of ministers trying to cover their tracks on the question of oil pricing and the commitments that were made about oil pricing during the election campaign. There have been at least three different positions taken. The entire country is bracing itself for a breach of faith on oil prices as dramatic as the Trudeau reversal on wage and price controls.

The previous government had committed itself to the objective of self-sufficiency, of ending our dependence on foreign sources, which are unreliable as to supply and certainly unpredictable as to price. The price was to go no higher than 85 per cent of the world price or the Chicago price, whichever is lower. There was to have been an 18-cent increase in the excise tax on gasoline with a 10-cent rebate for farmers, fishermen and urban public transit. There was to have been a refundable energy tax credit of \$80 per adult and \$30 per child