

The Budget—Mr. Brewin

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I must advise the hon. member that the point he is raising is simply a point of debate which he will be able to put before the House in his contribution either later today or tomorrow.

Mr. La Salle: Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the hon. member that the minister responsible told me last week that his officials were still negotiating this issue with the Quebec government and that he himself is still negotiating in order to arrive at some kind of solution. That is why I asked the minister to delay this increase as long as this dispute between the two levels of government remains unsettled. That is all I asked, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member for Laval is appalled, but there is a certain uneasiness at this time. Just look at the situation on the political front and you will understand the reason for this uneasiness. However, Mr. Speaker, I have the impression that you are soon going to ask me to resume my seat, so I would simply like to conclude by saying that, as far as we are concerned, Mr. Speaker, that is not the way we intend to achieve national unity. We respect our opponents' positions. We never treat them as enemies simply because they do not think the same way we do, and our aim is not to divide Canadians in two tight clans, but to encourage them, despite their opposite views, to have mutual respect and a common love of the great country that we dream of rebuilding under the wise leadership of our leader, the Leader of the Opposition.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to cover all the aspects in this budget we are debating. What I want to do is to expose an outstanding example of a wasteful program, which, if it were cancelled, as it should, could save Canada and its taxpayers \$2 billion at least.

Before I deal with that, however, I want to express a few general comments first. I accept the view put forward by my party that this budget does not adequately stimulate the economy or relieve Canada of its depressed economic conditions. To put the matter another way, unemployment will not improve. Indeed, if the prophecies of the U.S. lack of growth are fulfilled, the situation of unemployment in Canada may become a good deal worse. To my way of thinking, unemployment should have the highest priority of all. It should come first in any sound scheme of values in dealing with the economy. I am not thinking only of the economic waste of 1 million employable Canadians making no contribution to the growth and economic prosperity of the country. I am thinking also of the individuals, many of them in my constituency, who are living and will live frustrated lives, not having employment which is the economic base for individual well-being and a necessity to their sense of identity and success in life. I am thinking particularly of those many Canadian children whose lives may well be stunted by the apparent economic failure of their parents.

Why does the minister, who is clearly a man of compassion and intelligence, accept this situation? I can only attribute it to

[Mr.: No, M.]

the devotion of his party to private enterprise. Private enterprise, is not, cannot, and will not do the job or provide the jobs—

An hon. Member: I thought you people were always talking about small business.

Mr. Brewin: —and an industrial strategy in which both private and public enterprise, combined to provide full employment, is essential if we are not to drift on in our present unhappy situation. I have reason to think that the Conservatives would not do any better.

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): That is right.

Mr. Brewin: They equally pay obeisance to private business.

However, to get to the main thrust of what I have to say, we all know that we are in a time of stringency and restraint. Above all, waste in government and private expenditures must be ended. It is tragic that the most conspicuous example of such waste is entirely overlooked by the government. I refer to a matter discussed briefly this afternoon when the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Danson) made a statement concerning the proposed purchase of 130 to 150 fighter planes. Of course, defence and security are high priorities, but they are not sacrosanct. Defence expenditures must be scrutinized like any other expenditures, and firmly resisted if they are not necessary.

The purchase of these planes, we are told, is to cost roughly \$2.3 billion in 1977 dollars. With continued inflation and the decline in the Canadian dollar, I would estimate that at least \$3 billion is involved. This is by far the greatest expenditure on armaments made in this country in its history. By far the greatest expenditure is to be on manned interceptors to defend this country against a massive bomber attack by the U.S.S.R. Some part of the total no doubt, will be used for providing cover for ground troops in Europe under the provisions of NATO. Whatever may be said now, it is clear that by far the largest amount is to go to the so-called active North American defence.

I propose to show, Mr. Speaker, that these fighter planes are obsolete in the missile age. The essential task of anyone determining the distribution of defence dollars available is to weigh the importance and necessity of the proposed role for our military forces. The task is to weed out those roles not essential to the security of Canada and the stability of the world. There is ample evidence to suggest that fighter planes are not required on a substantial scale in any intelligent consideration of Canada's role. The reason for this is simple, namely, that the threat of a massive Russian attack by manned bombers is non-existent. The allocation of substantial Canadian funds for fighter planes in North America is an outstanding example of the wrong allocation of roles.

I well remember hearing more than ten years ago, in the parliamentary committee on national defence, two very distinguished Canadian soldiers, General Simonds and General Foulkes, who had risen to the top in active service during the