

The Budget—Mr. Hovdebo

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Crosbie that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the amendment thereto (Mr. Gray) (p. 2299), and the amendment to the amendment (Mr. Rae) (p. 2304).

Hon. Francis Fox (Blainville-Deux-Montagnes): Mr. Speaker, in the two or three minutes which are left to me I would like to wrap up and summarize my speech. I would very much have liked to have had the opportunity to continue to address my remarks to the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Atkey) who does not seem to be with us at the moment.

This government has been leading the nation for six months. In that short period of time, it has led Canada to the highest levels of interest rates in living memory. For six months this government has led unemployed Canadians to believe that they would be able to find a job under a Tory government. But the Conservative government has shown its true colours in the budget which the Minister of Finance (Mr. Crosbie) brought down on Tuesday night.

What the Conservatives are really leading this country to is an inflation rate of 11.4 per cent before 1981. They are leading this country to higher taxation imposed on those least able to pay it, and a much higher rate of unemployment. The budget which was tabled by the Minister of Finance indicates, in his own figures, that from a rate of unemployment of 7.5 per cent and with his leadership and his fiscal and monetary policies, he will take this country up to a level of 8.3 per cent unemployment by 1981. In human terms this means that, in spite of the announcement of the job-creation measures of the minister of employment today, we will proceed from a situation where we now have approximately 850,000 unemployed—men, women, youth and older people—to a situation where in 1981 we will have 986,000 unemployed. Those are the figures contained in the documents filed by the Minister of Finance.

[Translation]

So there, Mr. Speaker, after six months in power this is the only record of the Progressive Conservative government: the highest interest rates that members in this House have ever seen and an unemployment rate—as the result of measures put forward by the Minister of Finance who does not seem pleased that we already have such an unemployment rate—that will make it impossible for 850,000 Canadians to find a job. In addition to that figure, the policies of the minister unavoidably lead to the unemployment of 986,000 Canadians in 1980. I will end on those comments, Mr. Speaker. Such is the record of the government. It is time that we put an end to it and that we close the books.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Scott, Victoria-Haliburton): Order. I regret to inform the hon. member that his time has expired. However, he may proceed with the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, in this, my first speech before this House, I would be remiss if I did not begin with a tribute to my predecessor from the constituency of Prince Albert. For 26 years the Right Hon. John G. Diefenbaker represented my riding. The former Prime Minister dominated politics in our part of the country. That dominance eventually reached all of Canada. We may not have agreed with his politics or his position on many issues, but we could not dispute his agility as a politician, or his ability to catch the imagination of the nation right up to this Thirty-first Parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hovdebo: During his career I crossed Mr. Diefenbaker's path many times. As a boy, I met him with my father when he was my father's lawyer. As a university student I listened to him in mock parliament. As a professional educator and administrator, I was Mr. Diefenbaker's host when he, as Prime Minister, opened the town of Inuvik. I was his host again in 1965 when he presided at the opening of the John Diefenbaker Elementary School in the city of Prince Albert.

When I conceded defeat to Mr. Diefenbaker on May 22, he very generously wished me well by saying to his gathered supporters, "We may not be from the same party, but we are here for the same reason, because we believe in Canada".

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hovdebo: He said that the election process is a part of Canadian democracy. Although I did not often agree with the Chief, either politically or ideologically, I respected him. The Right Hon. John G. Diefenbaker served Prince Albert and Canada well. He believed in the strength of this Parliament and he trusted the parliamentary system. It is now my honour to represent Prince Albert. I will not betray that trust.

Prince Albert had other distinguished parliamentarians. First we claimed Sir Wilfred Laurier who, though he did not live there, was elected to represent that riding. Prince Albert was also represented for many years by the Right Hon. Mackenzie King. He moved there when he was defeated in Ontario. Prince Albert was then considered a safe Liberal seat.

● (2010)

An hon. Member: Those days are gone.

Mr. Hovdebo: Mr. King was defeated by the CCF in 1945 in a close election that hinged on the soldier vote. There is