

The Address—Mr. MacEachen

Mr. Crosbie: A question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Andre: Privilege.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Crosbie: I would like to be heard on my question of privilege.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) on a question of privilege.

Mr. Crosbie: I would like to have a chance to make a question of privilege before Your Honour rules on it. I am giving notice of it now, and I might want to elaborate on it later. My notice is that this is a budget speech being given here in the guise of a speech in the Address—

An hon. Member: How do you know?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member is out of order.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, first of all I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate Your Honour on your selection as the Deputy Speaker and Chairman of our proceedings—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Crosbie: It is not in the notes, Allan.

Mr. MacEachen: —and also to express through you to Madam Speaker my compliments on her accession to the post of First Commoner. I certainly wish her well as she takes on these very important duties.

As Mr. Speaker knows, this is the first time that I have had an opportunity to speak to the House in a formal way since I have become the Minister of Finance. I want to take the opportunity of thanking so many members of the House on this side, and on the other side, for extending me congratulations on taking on this work. Some have joined their congratulations with commiserations, but nevertheless, I appreciate the good will which has animated their good wishes. At the same time I should like also to express my real satisfaction that the mover of the address in reply (Mrs. Côté), and the seconder (Mr. Frith), in their speeches have revealed to the House once again that new members come here with idealism and dedication, and in their first appearance are able to stir the House more deeply than members who have been here for many years.

An hon. Member: That is a great introduction.

Mr. MacEachen: I regret, in a way, that the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) indicated that I am proceeding in an irregular way and, of course, I will debate that allegation with him later on. But my purpose in rising tonight is to clear up some unfinished business extending from the last two Parliaments, and to give the House background informa-

tion on the fiscal and economic situation which faces us as we consider the new business to which the Speech from the Throne referred.

The unfinished business concerns the status of tax measures which were introduced in the December 11, 1979, budget, and indeed of certain measures that still remain outstanding from the November 16, 1978, budget, measures which have not yet received parliamentary approval.

I would recall that roughly two months after the election of last May the then minister of finance issued a press release setting out his intentions with respect to tax and tariff measures which had been introduced by the former Liberal government. He, and the then president of the treasury board, also reported in some considerable detail on the fiscal and economic outlook at that time.

Mr. Knowles: In the House?

Mr. MacEachen: Had Parliament been in session, they would no doubt have chosen to make this information available directly to members of the House, and that is what I propose to do tonight.

Mr. Stevens: For five years?

Mr. MacEachen: I want to take advantage—

Mr. Clark: Demonstrate contempt for Parliament.

Mr. MacEachen: —of this early opportunity to end the uncertainty with respect to outstanding tax measures and to inform the House of the fiscal situation as I find it on taking over my responsibilities as Minister of Finance. Of course I shall also comment upon the current economic situation.

I shall start with the tax measures. Of course the government will not proceed with the increase of 18 cents a gallon in the excise tax on gasoline—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: You will tack it on somewhere.

Mr. MacEachen: —nor its extension to other transportation fuels proposed in December, nor will it reintroduce at this time the three measures affecting taxation on capital gains—the common stock investment plan changes in the treatment of capital gains, in Registered Retirement Savings Plans, and the provision for transfer of capital gains on farming assets to RRSPs.

● (2010)

Mr. Stevens: Shame.

Mr. MacEachen: I want to consider these and other measures in more detail, particularly in the light of a wide discussion about the role and importance of taxation on capital