

The Budget—Mr. Wagner

● (1700)

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, before the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) rose to speak, we all knew this budget was pretty bad. Having now heard the rambling explanation of the minister, coupled with some very unfair remarks directed to the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), we are convinced that the minister participated legally in what must be considered the most atrocious sham of recent political history.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, when I hear the remarks of the government members, I could perhaps explain to them more precisely what I mean when I say that this budget is the most atrocious sham of the recent political history of this country.

The budget brought down on the eve of Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day is the most indecent we have ever known. It is indecent because it is meaningless, regressive, inflationary and antisocial. Indecent as well because it is excessively centralizing, clearly insufficient, unprecise and on the whole amoral. Indeed the June 23, 1975 budget will signal the beginning of the end of the Trudeau-Turner tandem.

Mr. Pelletier (Sherbrooke): You said the same thing last year.

Mr. Wagner: I know that these comments hurt the government members, but they should know that their budget hurts even more the average Canadian taxpayers. They should know that this budget is a reflection of the government and that every budget brought down in recent years has revealed something more about this government. Monday's budget shows, unconsciously I would say, the government as it really is. This government whose main qualities, we must admit, whose diplomatic and strategic talents go against the real interests of the average Canadian.

Even though it had been elected originally to bring down separatism in Quebec, the government of this Prime Minister—the statistics speak for themselves in this regard—has only kept it alive. Even though it was reelected last July 8—only one member is applauding on the other side, and I understand him—even though it was reelected on last July 8 to curb inflation, according to its promises, the government of this Prime Minister—the statistics also speak for themselves in this matter—has only increased it. Today, the whole population can see the failure of its inaction policy. Today, we are suffering the consequences of action that was not taken.

Canadians will challenge this leadership which, once again, favours inaction and drift in economic matters, to which my hon. friends opposite have committed themselves. Only its majority in this House, which it does not have the maturity to handle, will keep this government in power for a while longer.

An hon. Member: For four years.

Mr. Wagner: That is too long. Someone on the other side says that it will be for four years! The Canadian people cannot wait that long.

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) and all their cabinet colleagues, which include the former president of a Quebec union organization, who is now Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand), all these good people have deliberately used strong arm tactics in this budget, in a style which is more reminiscent of provocation than of a true salary policy, as concerns the unions and their members who will undertake negotiations this year.

A government which no longer knows how to handle its leadership, which is unable to obtain a consensus on anything in the country, loses the confidence of its citizens. This government has done it!

[English]

Mr. Speaker, the budget brought down by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) has already been referred to by some as cynical, and rightly so. One provincial premier has already called it a wholesale tax grab. This was an understatement.

Mr. Baldwin: The minister did not bring down the budget; the budget brought down the minister.

Mr. Wagner: Most Canadians are deeply shocked and upset. I hear one member, the former parliamentary secretary to the minister of finance (Mr. Comtois), say to me, "En français", suggesting that I speak in French. Until further notice, there are two official languages in this country. I feel, Mr. Speaker, I have as much right to speak in French or English in this House as the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has the right to speak in French or English, and I have as much right to answer in English as some ministers have to answer me in French.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wagner: I hope this will be the last time I hear in this House a remark from a Liberal member asking me to speak in French when I judge that I should speak in English.

I say that most Canadians are shocked and upset. All members of this House are feeling the pressure of their constituents' concern and apprehension. This budget is more than cynical. It is more than just a tax grab. It is, above all, insensitive to the reality of the consumer in this country. The methods suggested for energy conservation are insensitive and are motivated by cheap political partisanship on the part of the Liberal government, rather than by any real concern for the interests of the consumers in this country.

The Minister of Finance knows, as does the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, that gasoline has been found to be an inelastic commodity with regard to price and demand. He knows that gasoline is very much like penicillin and other medication, in the average North American mind. The increased cost will not necessarily decrease the amount used. All the increased cost will do is effect a transfer of financial resources from other areas of the economy which desperately need these resources to sustain demand and employment. The United States had success in energy conservation when it reduced the speed limit to 55 miles an hour. That would have been a conser-