

The Budget—Mr. Stevens

and why he was pleased that they were finally stricken from the record and presumably would not be available in the future. The hon. member for York East spoke of the debate on the budget of the Minister of Finance in October 1980. As the House will recall, that budget renewed MURBs. In fact it was said at that time that in order to help reduce shortages of rental accommodation and to provide a needed stimulus to the construction industry, the tax incentive for multiple unit residential buildings which expired on December 31, 1979, would be reintroduced effective for construction starts after October 28, 1980. Why were we told by the Minister of Finance in October 1980 that a person is a hero if he puts money in the form of a tax shelter investment into certain types of residential accommodation, only to find that on November 12 that same person is suddenly an enemy of the state, that somehow he has been ripping off society and that the minister feels there is a loophole which he must plug? It is something which no longer holds together. The reason I find it most inconsistent for the minister to take that attitude, as well as presumably other ministers and the member for York East, is that we were told on budget night that it was a budget of restraint, of equity and of renewal. I should like to explore why it is equitable to say that tax shelters designed to give Canadians accommodation are evil and that they must be stricken from the record. At the same time the same government wants to preserve tax shelters for the promotion of circuses such as Circus Tivoli. If it is right to have tax shelters to promote circuses, films and related activities, certainly something must be totally wrong with a government that on the other hand indicates it does not want to see rental accommodations for Canadians built under the same tax shelter plan.

As I go through my remarks, I will be able to cite many examples of the lack of restraint in the budget, despite what the minister told us. In fact, there is no equity and no renewal other than whatever hope the minister might have of renewing his own fortunes in the country as a political animal and as a member of a political party. Before getting into that, I should like to make a special comment about a partner in the government's actions who seems to be almost bashful about taking full credit for what the country is going through at the present time. I refer of course to the fact that it is not only Dr. Trudeau who is prescribing this economic medicine; it is Dr. Broadbent. We have two doctors who are in grand alliance, working in virtual conspiracy as far as the Canadian public is concerned. I believe the Canadian public must be told in no uncertain terms that the rump NDP not only triggered the election of this government, but in truth is working hand and glove with the government in giving us economic irresponsibility.

Mr. Pelletier: Stick to your text.

Mr. Stevens: I heard a Liberal member ask why I called them Dr. Trudeau and Dr. Broadbent.

Mr. Pelletier: No. I said, "Stick to your text."

Mr. Stevens: Anyone who comes from my area of Canada, from Newmarket or from York-Peel, knows what doctor stands for. It is a Ph.D. It means piled higher and deeper.

Having said that, I feel it is important to attempt to get some perspective of where in fact Canada has been going in terms of other economies among western nations. I find this area startling. When the present government took power, Canada was third among world nations as far as the gross national product was concerned. In 1968 we stood third in terms of per capita gross national product in Canada; we were topped only by the United States and by Sweden. You will know how much we have slipped when you read in the World Bank atlas that we have dropped to number eight position. How many on the government side are willing to acknowledge that in the last set of statistics issued by the World Bank we have slipped to thirteenth position among world nations? The nations that on a per capita basis have a better GNP than Canada are Switzerland, Luxembourg, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Norway, Iceland, Netherlands and France.

• (2010)

An hon. Member: Kuwait.

Mr. Stevens: My prompter on the Liberal side says Kuwait. If he wants to add the oil rich countries, then he will find that we rate nineteenth in the world, not thirteenth. I am glad that at least one Liberal member is aware that not only are we behind the industrialized nations that I have referred to but in fact we are nineteenth if you add the various oil-rich countries of the world.

What is most interesting is not just those figures but the fact that if you start examining the relative gross national product figures on a per capita basis, not just on the average in Canada but with respect to provinces in Canada, you find some startling facts.

I referred, to the Secretary of State who comes from Nova Scotia as, of course, does the Minister of Finance. The next time they have an opportunity in this House, I should like one of them to stand up and explain to his people and to Canadians at large why he is content that Nova Scotia should have a per capita gross national product of about \$6,200 compared to the gross national product on average for every person in Greenland of \$7,990. Why, for example, do the five eastern provinces of Canada, including Quebec, all have a lower gross national product on a per capita basis than Greenland? Prince Edward Island has less than half the gross national product of Iceland.

Instead of being complacent and, if you like, rhetorical, and simply saying, "We are doing well and somehow or other it is a budget of restraint and equity and renewal," I think it is time that the government came to its senses. It is time it realized that it has taken Canada, a prosperous country and one that had great wealth and great earnings, and relegated it to a position well down on the list of prosperous nations of the world.