

The Budget

They also say that we should keep out foreign competition. In a situation in which we found ourselves being more dependent on foreign trade than any industrialized country in the world, they should realize how preposterous some of these suggestions are.

I leave it to my colleagues to speak more about the details and the positive aspects of the budget. Let me just look at a few examples of the approach used by our predecessors at a time like this and what it produced.

In my previous incarnation I was Minister for Science. When I assumed the portfolio in 1985 I was faced with the so-called SRTCs, the scientific research tax credits. In 18 months they cost us \$2.5 billion because everybody agreed that the country would have to engage in research and stimulate scientific activities to break out of a cycle and to become internationally competitive. What did it cost? All we had to do was offer people 120 per cent tax credits for any investment in scientific activities and, if it happened to require building a building or whatever. That was okay too. The country, scientists and people responded.

When it was all said and done 18 months later very little science and very little research had been produced. There was a lot of frivolous spending and trading off of tax credits. The cost to the Treasury was \$2.5 billion.

Mr. Nowlan: That is why they won the election.

Mr. Oberle: Yes, that is why they won the election, as my friend from Nova Scotia says.

Then there were the fast-track buildings. I inherited one of those too. It happened to be in Winnipeg. It was painted pink. It acquired the name of pink elephant in Winnipeg. It was a beautiful, world-class centre and the architects should have received a world-class prize. There was a stainless steel spiral staircase in the building, the cost of which would have produced for sure two cures for cancer if it had been spent on science. There was an elevator right beside it, but the spiral staircase was the attraction of the building, which was sitting right in downtown Winnipeg.

But there was no science conducted there. It was just a building. It was my job to coerce and coax some private sector people to get in there and make some use of it.

Frankly today, with a bit of effort, we actually do make some use of it.

• (1550)

Then there were the MURBs. Do we all remember the MURBs. I know a doctor of 55 to 60 years of age who was in the declining years of his career. He invested all his savings in Liberal government MURBs. He is still paying off the bill. He is literally living on his measly old age pension, having wasted his lifetime savings. All of us know people who were sucked in by the MURBs. They were to stimulate housing, get the housing industry going, create jobs and make us competitive.

Then there was the accelerated home mortgage program which was going to help all poor people get into homes. Members know how that worked. The payments would be very low; people could get into a new house with \$300 a month. Of course the difference between the \$300 and \$700 that the payment should have actually been was added on to the mortgage.

After five years you could walk down the street and people were throwing keys at you. People were running away from their homes in droves because they cost \$10,000 more than they could have built new houses for five to ten years later. That was the accelerated home mortgage program.

These are some of the policies that these people are urging upon us now.

They want to fix the municipal infrastructure. We have all heard about that. I want to tell the tale of two cities in Canada. The only criterion of the optimum size of each of these cities is one wants to be bigger than the other. The names of the cities are Montreal and Toronto.

I represent Prince George and Chetwynd. I talk to people who represent cities like Chicoutimi and smaller ones throughout the country.

The other criterion was that one had to have a bigger Olympic stadium than the other city and the taxpayers of Canada helped out a bit here and there. Now these cities want my people in Prince George, Chetwynd, Hudson's Hope and Pouce Coupe to pay for their water and sewer. Having paid for their own already, the people of Chicoutimi and so on are saying: "No. If the people of Montreal have problems with their water and sewage they should