

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 6, 1984

The House met at 11 a.m.

• (1105)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from Monday, March 5, consideration of the motion of Mr. Lalonde that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the Government.

Mr. Jack Masters (Thunder Bay-Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, again it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to participate in a Budget debate, particularly this one. I say that because the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) labelled his Budget "Partnership for Growth". It is my conviction that the Budget we are debating now is entirely appropriate to the times for a number of reasons.

It should be noted that the Budget in fact builds on strength in the country. Throughout the land, while we have difficulties and problems to surmount, essentially we are looking toward the immediate, medium-term and long-term future with a greater feeling of confidence than we have been able to feel collectively for many years due to many factors in the Canadian economy, the North American economy and the world economy.

• (1110)

Much will be said about the Budget in the next while both inside and outside this House. Some of it will be positive. Much of it, especially from Members opposite, will be negative. I respect the right and the duty of the Opposition to be critical, but I have a caveat, if I may presume to make a modest suggestion to Members opposite. They might consider legitimate criticism, because it is not a perfect world that we live in. We do not come up with perfect documents and plans. I hope that the tone of their opposition and comment will not be so entirely negative that it is counter-productive in the sense that it will take away from this feeling of confidence.

Confidence is not a partisan issue. Partisanship sometimes takes away from the fact that we have a wonderful country, that we believe in it, that because we are the kind of people we are, living in the land that we live in, we can look forward to the future with confidence. Confidence is also a state of mind.

All of us in this House have an obligation to contribute to that state of mind.

One of the first features about this Budget I would like to address, because I believe it is the most significant, is that it was prepared with a great amount of consultation. The word "consultation" is almost a cliché. It is so obvious that one wonders why we do not do it all the time. Each of us in our own sectors finds other priorities that prohibit or inhibit us from being able to speak openly with each other, to take the time to talk with one another and, most important, to listen to one another.

We are still in a very difficult period economically in our country's history. The mood is that we must listen to one another. We must consult with each other in a meaningful fashion. I believe even Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition will agree that some very important groups and individuals were consulted regarding this Budget. The common taxpayer was consulted. I see items in the Budget that came about as a result of representations from Members of this House in caucus. I see the changes that have been made. I hope some of this came about as a result of some of the letters and personal interventions that I have made. Opposition Members have expressed some thoughts in this House. They are all there, pointing the way.

It is a leadership direction that the Minister is taking on behalf of the Government of Canada. It says we must take a leadership role. This is something that governments can do. Governments can do some things well and we do some things very badly. One thing we can do, if we work at it properly, with the right attitude and with the right frame of mind, is to promote honest consultations, consultation being in the form of the two-way street that I mentioned earlier where we pass on our ideas, listen in return and come up with something better than either side could come up with individually. Some 30 major groups across this country participated in a most meaningful way in putting this Budget together.

While in political terms one does not want to acknowledge that many sectors of the economy have said that yes, this is a good Budget, that this is the right kind of Budget at this point in time, to my way of thinking one of the right things about the Budget that we are debating at this moment is that it does build confidence. But it did not send shock waves throughout the nation. That happens periodically and it must happen once in a while when we have to find new directions because we have been following one path for too long. All of us know that nothing is forever and that we have to change direction and thoroughly examine issues in the light of prevailing conditions in the world and in Canada.