

who manifestly enjoys the respect of parliamentarians on both sides of this chamber.

As far as our new Speaker is concerned, I am one of, I suppose, many thousands of Canadians who have followed his career with admiration and respect for a long time. He has many achievements to his credit. There have been two relatively recent events in his career that some people might regard as being—and he himself might regard as being—the low points of his career, but which I thought were very revealing of the values and the integrity that he brings to public life.

One was his resignation from the administration a couple of years ago on a matter of principle, on which, as it turns out, in my opinion, he was not only right but prophetic. The other was a decision in 1976, in the almost impossible political circumstances of that year in Quebec, to enter the provincial field and seek a seat in the National Assembly, to enter a campaign to fight for the kind of Canada that he and we believe in. He went into the provincial election in Quebec in 1976—

[*Translation*]

—with the results that we know, but they do not depreciate his gesture which was both courageous and exemplary.

[*English*]

Honourable senators, the election is over. After a brief interruption the Trudeau government is back in power. It is not at all to denigrate that achievement—and it was an achievement by the Leader of the Liberal Party and the Liberal Party itself—it is not to denigrate it to say that theirs is not a massive national mandate. Over half of their elected members come from one province, and they have no representation from three provinces. I know that the Right Honourable the Prime Minister has sought to overcome the regional imbalance produced by the election returns by appointing several distinguished members of this place to the administration, and I congratulate them, although I am not very encouraged by the results to date of those appointments.

In the last Parliament, the present Minister of State for Economic Development, Senator Olson, made a very interesting speech on energy policy. If any of those ideas have penetrated the consciousness of the Minister of Energy, Mine and Resources, it is certainly not apparent to date.

● (1520)

Last night there was a series of questions in this house from Senator Nurgitz and Senator Balfour as well as myself concerning the insensitive decision of the government, of the Minister of Finance, to cancel Mr. Crosbie's measure to permit farmers a once-in-a-lifetime deferral on capital gains tax on the sale of their farms if they transfer the gains to a registered retirement savings plan. That was a measure that was of some importance to many farmers everywhere. They had been seeking it for many years. Yet the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board was unable to provide a rationale for it.

It is clear that, even if he supports the decision as a matter of cabinet solidarity—and I take it that he does—the decision, even although it had disagreeable and unwelcome conse-

[Senator Murray.]

quences for farmers, is not one that he participated in. It is bad news for farmers that such decisions can be taken without the participation of Saskatchewan's or, I suppose, Alberta's representative in the federal cabinet. It is all well and good to appoint senators to the administration in order to overcome the regional imbalance, but it is futile if those ministers are given what Gordie Howe, another great son of Saskatchewan, once called the "mushroom treatment." In any case, the honourable gentlemen opposite have the privilege and responsibility of governing.

The Clark government that was elected on May 22 had a very short stay in power, but it was long enough to formulate and present our proposals to deal with some of the major problems and opportunities facing our country.

The Clark government had worked out an agreement with the oil-producing provinces and we had put forward a national energy policy that went beyond price, went beyond oil, and went beyond the short term to solve the problems with which we are now confronted. The Progressive Conservative Government had analysed the state of federal finances and its impact on our national economic goals, and our solution was in the measures proposed by Mr. Crosbie's budget last December.

Those policies, in particular our energy policy and our fiscal and economic policies, were not accepted by Parliament. They were not endorsed by the electorate in February. I happen to believe, and events as they unfold are reinforcing my belief, that time will vindicate those policies.

In any case, we will stand by them until the present Trudeau government implements policies that solve the problems rather than worsen them.

The present Trudeau government has four or five years to solve our problems, to produce results; but they do not have, as they seem to think they have, four or five years in which to develop solutions at their leisure. It is vital to the national economy, to the private sector, to provincial and municipal governments, to individuals and institutions who have decisions pending, that there be an honest, clear statement of this government's fiscal and economic policy.

There has hardly been a good word for the performance of the Minister of Finance two nights ago from any of the players in the Canadian economy, whether labour, small business, big business, farmers, the housing industry or other levels of government. This is not because the minister proposed harsh measures, but because his performance was so transparently an attempt to buy time until this disorganized government gets its act together.

A respected commentator, Ronald Anderson, says that the minister confirmed "what many had suspected; the federal government is adrift on a sea of troubles—without a compass." Mr. MacEachen's statement, says Mr. Anderson, is "a pointless, ineffectual policy statement that does not even pretend to have a purpose."

Honourable senators, with such an assessment of the government's posture all too general, confidence in the Canadian economy can only be adversely affected.