

Taxation

his or her head. This country is better than its government. This country deserves a better government. The backbenchers of the Liberal Party deserve better leadership than the economic ministers and the present Prime Minister. That is what is happening and that is why there was a change in Saskatchewan. That is why there are no Liberal votes west of the Manitoba-Ontario border except in a couple of areas.

Mr. Blenkarn: And there will not be any after the next election either.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): It will not be any better out there. I want to say to the Liberal Party that unless it changes course, there will be damned few in Ontario either. I am a little worried about the Liberal Party in terms of the province of Quebec as well.

Mr. Riis: Why worry?

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Well, I am worried because, quite frankly, I do not want to see the alternative of Members of Parliament who are devoted to breaking up the country running federally. I do not want to see that. I would rather see a misguided Grit than a separatist, although they may be equally damaging to the country, because we might be able to get some sense into the backbench members. However, that could very well happen. In eastern Canada, the Liberal Party is dying. Why? It is because it has become irrelevant. When the mudlarks from Meach Lake come down out of the hills and say, "We will do nothing about what is wrong with this country, we will not address the economic problems, we have nailed our colours to the mast and we will sail with the ship until it goes beneath the waves", that government has become irrelevant. The only thing it has is power. It does not have the principles to use that power correctly in the country's best interests.

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I have a document in my hand which I am prepared to put in the time I have and to the extent I can. It contains some alarming statistics. They are such that there can be no justification for a government asking for the unprecedented right to borrow such large sums of money at one time and impose excise taxes all at the same time. There is no justification for it.

I have dealt with interest rates, inflation and unemployment. I will now turn to the energy policy. I feel badly for some Canadians. When they voted on the budget of the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) those people in the gallery thought, "My God, that fellow Crosbie will nail us for 18 cents". Those people in the gallery never believed this government would get them for 90 cents. A man from my constituency came into the House of Commons. He turned his pockets out as a gesture toward the government. A person was hauled out of the House of Commons the other day because he voiced some dispute with the government.

Honesty is a marvelous thing. There were a lot of things in the budget of my friend, the hon. member for St. John's West,

that some members have forgotten. There was help for small business, a small business development bond that meant something, that was not a parachute to catch the stricken and the disabled but really meant something for small business, the energy tax credit which would have cushioned the energy cost to home owners, and mortgage interest. In addition, there was help with municipal taxes, capital gains relief for farmers, and northern tax benefits that had been neglected.

There was a whole host of things in that budget that would have helped certain beleaguered endangered sectors of the economy. It was not perfect. However, more and more Canadians are saying that that budget, at least in terms of its approach, was a lot better and more honest than the Cape Breton disaster of November 12, 1981. That is the worst budget. One does not need a Ph.D. in economics or be a Member of Parliament or a tax expert to realize the country is hurting. It is hurting because the government has not had sense enough to see what it needs.

What does this country need? It needs encouragement for Canadian entrepreneurs. You do not have to kick the little people in the seat of their pants. You do not have to tax the benefits they receive on their life insurance. Those benefits are an encouragement to save. You do not have to hit the medical or dental premiums that are paid by employers. At the same time, you use the tax system to create incentives where you want those incentives to be.

It is not the role of government to have its fingers in every pie. It need not intervene in every place of business. The role of government is to create an atmosphere where hard-working, entrepreneurial Canadians can do some things for themselves. That is the role of government.

Everywhere this government has put its finger, it has messed things up. Why? Not because of ill will. It just does not understand. How can you expect public servants to understand business in the same way as business people understand business? If I were a public servant, I would not understand it either. It is like asking a doctor to practise law or a lawyer to practise medicine.

The business sector has its role. Labour has its part to play. How can you inspire a sense of partnership in the country if you run around the country and say that co-operative federalism is dead and our history means nothing, if you assail the interests of organized labour and make the business sector, not the big corporations but the small businessmen, distrust government? If you so conduct yourself, the other two sectors, and everyone else will distrust government. That is where we are.

I am not in power now. I am not now a member of a government, but I was once and with the grace of God I will some day be a member of a good government once again. What this country needs is a responsive government that is prepared to match its rhetoric with reality and policies. I ask the fugitives from Meach Lake, where is that matching of rhetoric with policies? Where are the new things that are needed?