

The Budget—Mr. Best

television speech pointed out—I have forgotten the exact words—that his party had at last decided upon a position or a platform. Which position, Mr. Speaker? Which platform? Which of the 57 different varieties that were offered last week was he deciding upon? I do not know, and I could see in the audience behind him the puzzled, bewildered frowns of his delegates, wondering just which position they were deciding upon.

He said he had decided upon it, but a little later in the same speech, or again at this rally, he covered himself very well because he said something to the effect that “We will not really be committed to anything that has been brought up at this rally. We will take this merely as guidance. It will not hold us down in the house or when we form a government”. So really we are getting the best of both worlds, are we not? There are a number of policies from which they can take their choice, and they will not be bound by any of them. I think it must require practice to be able to say and bring about this sort of thing.

The purpose of this rally was very well defined by the hon. member for Trinity at its inception, in his opening remarks and introduction. He referred—to its purpose, and I am quoting from a newspaper report—as “the well-being and happiness of the individual”. If ever one could come upon a more generalized, a more vague, a more pleasant-sounding position than that, I do not know how. In a way it sounds like a conference of tranquilizer salesmen; “well-being and happiness of the individual”. Perhaps that is what it was meant to do, to lull the Canadian people, to put on a performance.

I did not see them on television and I was disappointed, but I am told about the pigeons. They got out of this meeting and rose to the rafters, much to the consternation of everybody. The band was playing, the dust settled down and it took them quite a long time to clear up that dust.

An hon. Member: They were homing pigeons.

Mr. Best: Perhaps they were homing pigeons. As the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Pallett) pointed out to me the other day perhaps they were just chickens going home to roost. In any case they were part of the entertainment value of this performance last week.

There are a number of other things. Indeed, it must have been difficult for the Liberal party to attempt a policy statement last week, with our government going into so many fields with vigour and determination. It must be most difficult for the opposition to try and nail down just a little corner of the canvas on something new which they can

do, whether to be right or left. This presents a genuine difficulty, and I sympathize with the opposition in their attempts to do so.

I was delighted, of course, that among the coterie of notables there I saw the photograph of the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillin-gate (Mr. Pickersgill) in the newspapers. He was beaming down at all of us across the country and I am sure he enjoyed his time; also the joint chairmen of the rally, the hon. member for Trinity and the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Robichaud). I am told though perhaps not on good authority, that the hon. member for Gloucester is getting a little jealous of the hon. member for Trinity because of his singing ability, but I am sure that with practice he can achieve something like the same level of tonal quality.

The Leader of the Opposition, with considerable vigour, championed his party's cause with comments such as, “Let us have an election this year; the sooner the better, and so forth. But knowing him as we do here in this house, I think we detect just a faintly hollow note in these utterances, because he has done this before, and he has suffered the consequences of what happened when he did it before. I do not think that this remark was really meant to be taken quite at its face value.

It was quite a performance, all told. They looked at various questions such as red China. There was talk here and there about that with violent disagreements. They did not talk too much about trade. How could they? Agriculture, as I have said, was disappointing to me personally and, I think, to many others, because of the lack of direction from the hon. member for Essex East. But there were other things. It reminded me—these pigeons and all that sort of performance; the Coliseum being used for various purposes—of an opera house of sorts. Some people pointed out that all this had a slightly operatic effect, with the hon. member for Trinity adding a somewhat Wagnerian touch. Perhaps this was meant to give comic relief, or relief of some sort from the tedious round of meetings. There were many odd birds; it had a certain zoo-like quality.

On subjects such as defence, we were puzzled. We have seen, as I say, a change in this Liberal party. A party which, in part at least, was the architect of such organizations as NORAD now swings violently away from commitments and co-operation with our neighbour to the south.

An hon. Member: Bird watchers.

Mr. Best: Yes, bird watchers. They are getting out of the interceptor field. I admit