

*The Budget—Mr. Boucher*

Minister of Finance in the last few years to propose some measures which did not make him popular with what is sometimes called "the little man" in this country. It is obvious now that the great majority of our people have readmitted our Minister of Finance to their affections. Some politicians will naturally draw far-fetched conclusions and, in a very loud voice, level some criticism at this year's budget. It is my belief that those politicians who criticize are not by any means the best judges of the question. The people of Canada who earn their living by labour in industry and by working on their farms—one must admit there are many more of them than there are politicians—are the ones to say whether or not they like it. I am convinced, Mr. Speaker, that the great majority of Canadians approve this budget.

Some hon. gentlemen from the other side of the house have maintained, and still try to maintain, that in this instance the majority has been bribed. Such a contention is utterly ridiculous. So long as we uphold our democratic system, and I am sure it is not the wish of any members across the floor of this house to see the system destroyed, so long as we believe in that system and believe that our people are not susceptible to bribery, then we shall have faith in their judgment. I am sure the members on the other side of the house will find this out for themselves as soon as, in our democratic way, our people are asked to write their verdict on a ballot.

The budget which is now before the house is a logical development of the sound financial policy that has been pursued by the present administration during the last war, in the immediate post-war years and in these post-reconversion years. During the war the pay-as-you-go policy enforced by this government met with general approval. In the post-war years, although the taxpayers of this country would have welcomed some relief from the burden of taxation that remained on their shoulders, they readily understood that this nation's debt had to be reduced as much as possible. The immediate reduction of taxes would mean the maintenance of our debt and interest charges, encourage inflation and, in the end, would result in no relief at all. The careful administration of our fiscal structure paved the way for the more considerable reductions that are now proposed.

The record of national debt reduction since 1945 is one of which we should be proud and for which the members of the present government should be commended, because it is one of the important factors that make the present tax reductions possible. The soundness of the fiscal policies put into effect by this government is attested to by the continued prosperity of Canada as shown in the white paper tabled by the hon. Minister of

Finance. Our gross national production, gross national income and our employment figures during the course of the last year were higher than ever before in our history and higher than could have been expected a few short years ago. Put in terms of fair prices for farm products, work and wages for our people, it means a greater degree of prosperity and happiness than we have enjoyed in the past.

The present government has pledged itself to maintain this prosperity and that is one of the important reasons why I pledged my strongest support to it. So far Liberal policies have succeeded, and I foresee that they will bring us more progress in the next few years. The reduction of taxes this year will have the effect of furthering this prosperity because it will more firmly establish the prosperity of the farmer. This government is fully aware of the fact that Canada is prosperous only when the Canadian farmer is prosperous. Our experience under a Tory government from 1930 to 1935 proved that. The Liberal government fully realizes, as it should, that the welfare of agriculture is, and will continue to be, absolutely essential to the proper functioning of our economic machinery.

The most important industry in the constituency I represent is, of course, agriculture. The wheat grown in Rosthern is second to none in the world. Improvements in agricultural methods and fair returns for our product are properly our main concern. Through the agency of the Canadian wheat board we farmers have been helped tremendously in the marketing of our products at fair prices. The increase of twenty cents a bushel announced in this house by the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) some weeks ago will have a considerable effect on the maintenance of prosperous conditions in Canada. We realize all the benefits we derive from the Canadian wheat board. We uphold it one hundred per cent.

The farmers of western Canada have recently been watching the grain markets very closely. They have not forgotten the experience of the past when markets were lost in spite of attempts and claims that we could "blast our way into the markets of the world". They know that markets cannot be gained or retained by "blasting". For this reason I, and I believe the great majority of the farmers in the prairie provinces, are solidly behind what has come to be known in our province as the Gardiner policy of long-term contracts. When we look at our present prosperity and remember what the so-called open market did to us in the past, it is impossible to make any sensible farmer believe that he has really lost money through