

*Government Orders*

been lacking for too long at the federal and provincial levels: moral leadership and a clear sense of direction.

By moral leadership I mean simply that political leaders have to start telling the truth. It is very doubtful that people can be bought with old-style election promises anymore. Politicians are becoming more clever and cynical.

In this pressure filled, complex world we all want to offer hope. However, this often comes in the form of over-simplified solutions to the problems of the day.

It has been said that for every complex problem there is a simple, plausible solution that is wrong. As long as we keep offering up simplistic solutions people will continue to be cynical. Frankly, all political parties engage in this from time to time.

I believe that people want to be treated like adults and told the truth. More important, if we are going to summon the will as a nation to meet the challenges of the coming decades our people must understand the nature of those challenges.

What about a clear sense of direction in the context of looking at things differently? Obviously, if you do not know where you want to go you will never figure out how to get there. Sooner or later in this country we must agree on a vision of our economic future, if we can fit it in while we argue over our conflicting linguistic and cultural visions.

First, we should commit ourselves to striving to be the best, if not the best in the world at least the best in North America. We have had enough of being a bronze medal country.

As a nation, we should adopt qualitative excellence as our standard of performance. The challenge of overcoming mediocrity is a difficult one to meet. The need to do so was never more crucial however. The failure of this government to set its sights on higher objectives, to get beyond the mumbo-jumbo of deficit reduction targets that are never met is the failure to inspire Canadians. This failure has cost us greatly as a nation.

Second, Canada's commitment to education should be unequivocal. This is one of the areas in which we are getting ourselves into trouble. While we seem to spend a great deal on education our product, especially in the areas of math and natural sciences, is showing clear signs of being woefully inadequate. We must train our people in the skills they will need to perform the good jobs of tomorrow. It is not good enough to let them elect their

way into menial jobs because that will make all of us poor.

Further, we must demonstrate that we understand that education does not end at the work place door. Canadian business is simply not spending enough on worker skill upgrading in comparison with the U.S., Germany and Japan.

Third, Canadian governments must invest in infrastructure. Our transportation and communication infrastructure must be continually maintained and upgraded for the sake of our future prosperity.

Fourth, we must be prepared to make the tough decisions to focus our resources strategically. Government spending on infrastructure and research and development should be highly disciplined and as free as possible from the political pork barrel.

We should play to our strengths, not as a matter of picking winners and losers, but let us make sure that our winners keep on winning and let us stop prolonging the death throes of the losers. This will get us nowhere if the people of Canada do not buy into it. For that to happen it is of fundamental importance that this hard-edged economic strategy include within its reach the need to restore the social contract between Canadians and their governments, and at the same time restore the natural environment whose endowments provided our initial base of wealth.

These three elements, the economy, the social contract and the environment, should be understood as one web of material. Progressive social reforms begin with good economic policy. However a strong and competitive economy requires a healthy and well-educated society. It is no less certain that a strong economy tomorrow requires that we respect the environmental imperative of sustainability today.

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Sadly I can find nothing in this year's budget to suggest that the government is trying to come to grips with the bigger, longer term problems that are looming. Think back over the economic news of the past year and ask how the budget reveals a strategy for the problems that have been emerging.

These range from the problems in the resource sector, a fishery crisis, problems in the petroleum industry, agriculture, forestry, mining, through to what my colleague from Willowdale has called the deindustrialization of Ontario, as our central Canadian industrial heartland is reeling from shutdown after shutdown of industries, all these shutdowns being of a permanent