

*The Budget—Mr. Clark*

brought in now? Why should there be so much secrecy? Why should Canadians be kept in the dark about the basis of national economic policy? There is no reason. This government, which has grown so old in office, is so captive to the old habit of secrecy that it simply will not break it.

I give to the people of Canada and to this House the commitment that after the next election we as a new government will break that bad habit and let the sun shine in on the five-year forecasts and projections on which national economic policy is based.

I think all of us in this parliament are concerned about how much, if anything, must be kept secret and how much can be made public. We must take a hard look at taking away part of the veil which now covers our budget-making process. We know that the way the United States deals with the problem of holding a potential special advantage because of special information is by making sure that all information is available to everybody. Here we keep all information from everybody. I think we must take a hard look at whether the system in the United States does not have more to recommend it than the system which has led us to so much economic difficulty here.

With regard to those technical changes in budgetary policy which can confer no positive or negative advantage or disadvantage, we in this party think that those matters should be discussed in public and that they should be moved out, from the preparation of this budget onward, into the open so that there can be that kind of consideration.

Unfortunately, this secrecy which has cast a shadow and a cloak over budgetary policy is pervasive in this government. In the budget documents there is a brief, seemingly innocuous but dangerous reference to some \$300 million which the government of Canada is going to make available to those companies which are adversely affected by the negotiations at the Geneva round of GATT. The government knows what went on at GATT; parliament does not, the companies affected do not. The government does know, and the government is of the view that at least \$300 million worth of damage was done to the Canadian public interest and to the interests of Canadian companies by what was negotiated away at GATT.

Part of the reason that that causes so much concern is that the industries whose lives and future are being affected by these negotiations at GATT have consistently been kept outside. Once again, other nations with economies far more complex than ours have found ways to ensure that industries whose lives are affected by tariff negotiations have a means of participating in those negotiations. That is not the case here.

**Mr. Martin:** They have had a lot of input.

**Mr. Clark:** The parliamentary secretary correctly says that they have had a lot of input, but they have had input up to a point, and then public servants—admittedly good people—have had theirs. The industries involved have been sent away, but there is no role in Canadian delegations, as there is in the delegations of other countries, for representatives of some of those industry groups to participate directly in the negotiations. One consequence is that not only do people live with the

[Mr. Clark.]

certainty that the Government of Canada has concluded that there has been at least \$300 million worth of damage done to the Canadian economy by the GATT negotiations, but also there is the suspicion that if somebody who knew more about an industry which was bargained away had been present at the table, then the injury done to that Canadian industry would not have occurred. That is the tragedy, and we must change our procedures to prevent that.

The basic weakness of this budget and, indeed, the basic weakness of this government is that it is standing pat. It is dealing with the past. It has no sense of the future of this country. In ten years the government has wasted and crippled some of the great building assets of Canada.

This budget promises us a deeper deficit and stagnation as usual. There is no excitement in this budget, and there is no excitement in this tired old government. There is no excitement about the potential of this country, and this budget certainly offers no encouragement.

It is quite interesting to look at the threads which run through the language of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. They talk about the problems Canada faces and about this being a difficult world. They talk about all the obstacles we face and about all the bad things which are in the atmosphere. The fact is if they would get out of their cocoons and visited this country, if they would stop apologizing about what they had done and began to look at what we can do as a people, they would realize that this is not a country beset by problems, but a country beset by opportunities and possibilities.

● (1742)

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** Nobody pretends that this is an easy country to govern, it never has been, but there is no question at all that Canada can be governed, that it can grow as an economy. What is necessary is to have a Government of Canada that is prepared to trust the people of Canada more than this government does. There has to be a determination to encourage the instinct to build which is part of Canadian life, whether it is evident in a company like Great Lakes Air—which wanted to buy the airline which the government bought—in a company like Alberta Gas Trunk Line—which moved in and ensured Canadian ownership in a far preferable way to having Petro-Can move in—or, indeed, whether it is evident in the aspirations of countless Canadians across the country who simply want to own, buy or build their own homes and want this government, through mortgage interest deductibility and other means, to help them. These people want the Government of Canada to adopt that kind of policy because it indicates that it is prepared to back up with its policy those Canadians who want to go out and build for themselves.

**Mr. Martin:** Talk about the cost.

**Mr. Clark:** I shall talk about the cost, and I will talk about the consequences as well.