

The Budget—Mr. Saltsman

Before the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) leaves the House—I know he is not doing so intentionally—I should like to make a comment that I want him to hear. I read one of his speeches the other day in which he said very much the same thing. Perhaps he did not mean to say it, but what he said was that the only way we can keep foreign-owned corporations in Canada is to give them higher profits. I think he said this in reference to the fact that automobile prices are higher here than in the United States. He says we have to give them more profits. In other words, we have to continue to bribe them. The minister may now leave if he wishes.

• (1630)

I suppose this is an industrial strategy of sorts, but is it really the kind of industrial strategy any self-respecting nation can live with, and is it the kind of industrial strategy Canadian wage and salary earners want? Are they going to be willing to pay more and more taxes in order to bribe corporations into staying in Canada? Are we Canadians so impotent we cannot develop our own country? Do we not have the technique, the ability, intelligence or whatever it takes to do this ourselves? The sole industrial policy of the Liberal party is to bribe the hell out of corporations.

If DISC offers certain advantages let us figure out what this will mean to foreign-owned corporations. The Liberal government will not try to legislate in respect of them, put safeguards in our measures and will not tell these corporations that while operating in Canada they must act as good citizens. This government just bribes them, ups the ante and gives more than any other country would give them. I do not think we can give them much more as we are collecting very little in corporation taxes now. The amount is down to about \$2.3 billion. If you take into account the fact that almost a billion dollars goes out in respect of DREE and another half billion in other government handout programs, we are not even collecting \$1 billion from the corporate sector. As Carter asked, if you do not get anything from the corporations why do you need them? Surely, we are entitled to expect, not that corporations will carry the entire load of requirements in our society, but that they will carry part of the load instead of shifting it entirely to the shoulders of the wage and salary earners in this country.

One must ask who his friends are, because that's what politics is all about. It is obvious who are the friends of the Liberal party, and it is not the wage and salary earners of Canada. That party gives little consideration or thought to them. Perhaps now that an election is imminent, it will be very difficult for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) to resist the pressures being brought to bear by the bagmen. I am sure they will not have any more trouble with him. This budget is a bagman's delight. The bagmen could not ask for anything better from the Minister of Finance. He has given them a marvelous gift on the eve of the election. The government does not even have to be very generous to the corporations of Canada. There are a few that are important, but that number becomes even less as far as the Liberals are concerned. They sometimes think about the Tories, but that is corrected very quickly when a budget such as this is presented.

[Mr. Saltsman.]

This is not a very generous government. If you take back one per cent of the beautiful handouts, the Liberal party will only have \$5 million to go into this election. There is another incidental benefit. If the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) wants to hold a banquet in Toronto, he can up the price because they can certainly afford to pay it. He does not have to improve the quality of the food and there is no reason to expect that the speeches will be any better. At least he can ask for more money because he has been generous, and I would think this generosity will be reciprocated in some way. Business may be grateful for these handouts but most Canadians will not be. I do not want to minimize some of the features of this budget which provide some benefit, but for the majority of Canadians there is very little in the budget which will be of assistance.

The Minister of Finance is playing a curious kind of game. He is playing a sort of Robin Hood role in reverse, robbing from the poor in order to help the rich. Perhaps we should call him "Hood Robin" when he plays the game that way. He is putting his hand in the pockets of the poor to help the rich. One is not supposed to rob from anyone in a civilized country, but he has decided to put his hand in the pockets of the wage and salary earners in order to help those people who do not require this kind of assistance. If we felt this was the only way to stimulate the economy of Canada, no matter what inequalities might result, perhaps we might have to put aside this question of equity. However, there is no evidence that equity has to be sacrificed, particularly at a time when profits are rising substantially in Canada. Profits bottomed out long ago and are now beginning to level off. There is no evidence which would indicate that the profit picture has to be improved in a general way in order to provide full employment, unless of course you take the view that the government is impotent, helpless and has no way of dealing with things like DISC or threats against the Canada-U.S. auto agreement.

Let us consider this charming and gallant "Hood Robin", our Minister of Finance. He does what you expect of a charming and gallant man. As he leaves the bank he has just robbed, or leaves the poor from whom he has just taken, he sees a lady selling apples on the corner and is seized with a moment of sentimentality. He reaches into his pocket and gives her a big tip. He hopes this act of kindness will obscure what he has just done. He hopes it will obscure the offence of acting against the poor of Canada in favour of the corporations. I do not think even his smile is enough to cover up what is happening.

In my view, and I believe in the view of all my colleagues, this is a fraudulent budget. The old age pensioners are supposed to be grateful for the \$2.88 increase they will receive. Those receiving the income supplement will get some assistance and we are happy for that. There was no increase in basic old age pensions, and this is long overdue. These pensioners are supposed to be very thankful, but from every indication I have seen they are not. These people are not stupid. They know that the cheques are supposed to reach them just before the election and that they are expected to respond with gratitude. Perhaps the pensioners would be grateful if they were to receive the kind of largesse the corporations are getting from this government. Perhaps they should give back 1 per cent,