

The Budget—Mr. Robinson

expenditures will be unwelcome for others. Those in the public service will object to the reduction in the public service growth and the tougher government salary negotiating position. Nevertheless the difficult economic position which we are presently experiencing demands such measures.

I have found it difficult to comprehend how some members have attacked the budget because of these unpopular measures on the one hand, and on the other hand have demanded that the government do more than it has already done.

Out of one side of their mouths they cry for less government spending, and out of the other side they list an almost endless number of areas where the government should be doing more, and that means spending more. They say there should be more control of government spending, but object violently to proposals such as those regarding hospital insurance and medicare which would give the government greater control of the cash, and limit increased expenditure.

Probably no aspect of the budget has created more controversy than the 15 cents jump in the cost of gasoline. However, throughout the debate on the subject there has been a couple of fundamental points, so as far as I am aware, on which there has been agreement. The first is our one price system for oil, and the second is the realization that the price of oil must rise eventually.

While everyone agrees as to the necessity, indeed the obligation, to subsidize eastern Canada which is dependent on imported oil, the problem, stated by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald), is that no one wants to pay for it. Well, it simply has to be paid for. The question is how? If we are to depend upon general revenues to pay for the subsidization of imported oil, this means in fact all taxpayers are paying regardless of their consumption.

One member of the opposition claimed that 10 cents a gallon excise tax on gasoline will place the tax burden squarely on the back of the poor working man. I would agree that that would be true if the poor working man in this country owned two cars, a snowmobile, and a motor boat or two. I do not know about his constituency, but in my constituency the poor do not possess such luxuries. I believe it is obvious that if one can afford the purchase cost of various personal gas consuming vehicles it must be assumed that person can afford the operating cost.

As for the question of the eventual increase in the price of oil, it is simply a question of opting for moderate increase now or a larger and more drastic increase in the future. We must accept the fact there we are importing more oil at the international price than we are exporting. No longer can we depend on the export oil tax revenues to pay for imported crude, or at least for the difference between the domestic and imported price. The longer we delay raising the price of oil, the greater deficit we incur with regard to the oil compensation fund. Ultimately, we will have to pay the price.

I was glad to see that the only reduction in defence spending was \$10 million from capital. I feel that defence is an area that is too often forgotten, and in my further comments during this budget debate I intend to concen-

[Mr. Robinson.]

trate primarily on one aspect of our defence policy which, in my opinion, has received all too little attention in past discussion. It is an area in which I have been personally involved for a number of years, that is, the reserve force of the Canadian armed forces. I also hope, if time permits, to say a few words concerning the Canadian cadets movement. It should be noted that both these groups have in the past number of years suffered from a steady reduction in their strength. It was not until just recently that these trends have begun to be reversed. However, before I go into that, permit me to give a brief outline of our reserves.

The reserve component of the Canadian forces consists of officers and men who are enrolled for other than continuing full-time military service except when called out on active service. The sub-components of the reserve force are: first, the primary reserve which I shall for the most part be concentrating upon and whose members generally serve in formed units which are grouped as naval, militia, air and communication reserve units; second, the supplementary list whose members are unpaid but have had previous military training and could be recalled to service in an emergency; third, the cadet instructors list, consisting of commissioned officers whose primary duty is the supervision, administration and training of cadets; fourth, the Canadian rangers, consisting of volunteers who hold themselves in readiness for service in our sparsely-settled, northern, coastal and isolated areas.

The primary reserve at the end of the Second World War was a very large organization. Militia strength alone in 1947 was 47,500. However, by 1973 this figure dropped to less than 14,000, and I understand that today it is at 14,383. Similar though not quite so drastic declines took place in the naval and air reserves.

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What are the factors which contributed to this decline? One consideration must be the number of major reorganizations in the reserves during this period of time. This organizational turbulence led to instability, force reductions, and variations in roles and tasks.

Another factor that has adversely affected our reserve force in recent years, and perhaps it is the most important factor, was the "forces-in-being" concept. This stemmed from the polarized international politics of the cold war era, where the defence emphasis was on fighting, with little warning, an all-out nuclear war. After taking such a position it is easy to see how our force planners concluded that the reserve force could play only a limited part in such a concept. As a result it received little priority in planning. Pay raises were few and insignificant, regular force support staff was steadily eroded, and virtually no equipment was purchased for their use.

However, international conditions have changed. There has been a decline in the emphasis on nuclear war, while at the same time increased importance has been placed on improving both conventional capabilities and the national mobilization base. This lessened the stress on regular forces-in-being. In Canada, the white paper on defence drew attention to new priorities.

During the same period, while our military roles and missions have broadened, the regular force has been steadily reduced in strength. More and more we are reduc-