

The Budget—Mr. Penner

passed on to the consumer, then I would support such a measure.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to compliment the Hon. Member for Huron-Bruce (Mr. Cardiff) on his presentation. We have heard a great deal about the problems associated with having a low Canadian dollar. I knowing that the Hon. Member has been involved for many years with the export of white beans in his riding. Has the lower dollar been an advantage in the export market? Would these markets be better with a higher or a lower dollar?

● (1630)

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question. I think we have learned how to live with the 70 cent dollar extremely well. One of the major commodities which is produced in my riding is white beans. We have been successfully exporting that commodity to the European markets. It is one of our main exports to Europe. Certainly, the value of our dollar has assisted us there. Mind you, there is not as there was much difference between our Canadian dollar and the Euro-dollar as in the past, but even with the closing of that gap, we are still doing extremely well in exporting to Europe.

I think that with any export markets to China or to any place in the world, our dollar has been on advantage to us and has allowed us to compete probably better and more fairly with the United States. It has certainly helped us in our dealings with the United States, which is one of our major markets for agricultural products.

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior): Mr. Speaker, since the Budget Speech of last week, I have tried to spend as much time as I can in carefully going over the written text and looking at the accompanying documents, and I have come to three inescapable conclusions about the Budget. I certainly do not want to sound like a crabby, cranky, negative opposition Member because I heard that for long enough in this House of Commons. However, my conclusion is that the Budget we received is, first, a pretentious Budget. I understand there has been a very elaborate communications strategy constructed to help government Members sell the Budget. I would have to say that this is a Budget which needs to be sold. It is certainly not one which can very ably stand on its own merits. The Budget is pretentious and false in many respects.

Second, I have concluded that the Budget is unfair. It places the obvious burden of deficit reduction on the backs of those who are struggling now to make ends meet in their personal and family lives. I am talking about the lower and middle income Canadians.

Third, I have concluded that this is a Budget which is counterproductive in terms of the effect it will have on economic growth. Rather than serving to fortify our economic recovery which is now under way, it applies the brakes to that growth. Instead of surging ahead, as it appeared we were going to do last year, it seems we are now limping along. The Minister himself predicts that we are going to have a decline in our rate of growth, and I will come back to that in a moment.

I want to elaborate on those three points. I have described the Budget as being pretentious because in introducing it, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) laid claim to its considerable merit and great importance. For a good part of his speech, we had to listen to the Minister patting himself on the back for all of his past endeavours. He heaped praise on the Government for its performance during the past 18 months. In a good part of the speech there was considerable political rhetoric and not very convincing Party propaganda. I think there are very few Canadians who are all that impressed with the way in which the Government so far has conducted our national affairs or tried to deal with the economy. I believe this pretentious Budget was designed to try to impress the currency traders in Chicago, London and New York, but it certainly failed to impress them. All we have to do for an indication of that is to look at our poor, sad dollar.

The Budget pretends to come down on Government expenditures. It is true that there are some decreases, some that hurt very badly, but there are also some increases. Over all, this Government plans to spend more than \$116 billion, closer to \$117 billion. That is a much larger amount of money than any Liberal administration ever dreamed of spending. And we were never pretentious about it. When Government spending increased, Canada was suffering from a world-wide recession.

The previous administration did spend money in order to ward off the worst effects of that economic downturn and, by and large, I believe it succeeded in doing that. Now we are into a moderate recovery, but the Government is still unable to control its spending. There was a last-minute decision to cut \$500 million from a spending program which is going to total nearly \$117 billion. Would you not agree with me, Mr. Speaker, that that is rather pretentious?

The Government has discovered just how difficult it is to make deep, deep cuts in spending. Politically, it is just not very acceptable. Here in Ottawa there are many powers and forces always at work to prevent any special advantages from being taken away or any significant decreases in spending from occurring. They are called lobbies, pressure groups or influential individuals. They have a way of affecting the decision-making which goes on in those areas. But not the average Canadian, the person who earns a lower or middle income, the person who comes from the less developed regions of this country, not some of our more disadvantaged citizens. They lack influence in Ottawa. They are the ones who, generally speaking, work the hardest. They have precious few benefits, certainly, from the tax system, and they carry most of the tax burden, municipally, provincially and federally.

That leads me to my second point. The stated aim of this Budget is to reduce the deficit. I think there is hardly an Hon. Member who would not say that this is a worthwhile goal. We do have to reduce the deficit. However, the Budget proposes to do so, first, by spending more than has ever been spent before and by taxing much more heavily those citizens who, as I indicated earlier, are not in a position to pay that additional money.