

● (1440)

Miss Nicholson (Trinity): Planes follow planes when the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) travels. He must have a separate plane to carry video equipment. Almost \$2 billion has been wasted on failed banks as a result of poor judgment and a Government acting hastily without troubling to get the facts. The litany goes on and on. With this kind of management, with the kind of policy and tax punishment Canadians have received at the hands of the Government, we are certainly in need of tax reform, if only to restore the balance and equity that disappeared as a result of the three Budgets produced by the Government.

My colleague, the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau), spoke very eloquently yesterday on the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements which are not even mentioned in this Budget. The current arrangements are due for renegotiation at the end of March this year, and the Budget was as silent on that as it was silent on a host of other vitally important issues.

Where does the Government stand on nationhood? My colleague also pointed out that although the national figures for unemployment have improved somewhat, they have become worse in several areas of Canada. The Government is also cutting back on transfers to post-secondary education and health care, so in effect it is transferring the deficit from the federal level to the provinces.

Mr. Lewis: That's a good idea.

Miss Nicholson (Trinity): The Hon. Member opposite said that is a good idea. Perhaps that is a statement of the intentions of the Government in the upcoming federal-provincial negotiations. If so, the Government should tell us. The Government is being very silent on its intentions for the provinces.

The list of government critics grows. I have quotes but I will not bother to put them on the record. It is sufficient to say that three provincial premiers, all Conservative, are all unhappy with the present arrangement.

What is the Government doing to make a better future for Canadians? This Budget offers no answers and proposes no solutions. It is a non-Budget. It helps no one. It merely increases taxes a little. At the height of the brutal world recession in 1982 Canada's unemployment rate was 11 per cent. In January 1987, after four years of economic recovery, it is 9.7 per cent. This is totally unacceptable in our circumstances. It is a far cry from pre-recession unemployment levels of 7.5 per cent with which none of us were completely satisfied. Yet this Budget offers no help, no hope. The Government is content to pass the buck to market forces.

The number of Canadians falling below the poverty line is increasing year by year. Almost four million Canadians are now living below the poverty line. The Government offers no help for them, but instead turns the screws a little by imposing

The Budget—Miss Nicholson

a few more nickel and dime measures to wring a few more tax dollars from our poorest citizens.

If one were to look at this year's income tax form, one would see that those applying for tax credits are now instructed to report their estimated incomes from sources such as welfare and workers' compensation. This is not a new requirement, just a little fine tuning aimed directly at the poor to ensure that the Government can keep a tighter hold on and better control of its tax credits. The Government is making sure the poor do not receive anything to which they are not entitled, but we are not seeing similar vigilance directed at wealthy Canadians.

The Government also continues to make its major announcements outside of the Budget. We learned through an announcement made by the Minister responsible for youth that there will be much less money for summer jobs this year. Money for post-secondary education is being cut and the money to help young people get jobs is being cut. The screws are being turned on student loans. Government policies are making it difficult for young people to get an education or to get a job. What has happened to the Canadian concern with equality of opportunity? How can one have equality of opportunity without having access to higher education? Is higher education to be the preserve of those with wealthy parents? Is that the kind of country we are to anticipate?

Speaking of the young, we see nothing in this Budget for child care. In fact, the most disturbing omission in this so-called Budget is its lack of leadership. The Government seems to have abdicated completely and to have put the future of Canada into the hands of the so-called market forces rather than leading, governing and making decisions as it was elected to do. Canadians deserve better.

Mr. Charest: Mr. Speaker, first I would like to make one small, unpretentious, uneditorialized comment. I would like to go through the unemployment figures of September 1984 and compare them with those of today. That has been a matter of concern, brought up not only by the Hon. Member for Trinity (Miss Nicholson) but also by her colleague, the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau).

When we came into power in September 1984 the unemployment rate in Newfoundland was 23.8 per cent. It is now 19.2 per cent. In New Brunswick it was 16.2 per cent in September 1984 under the Liberal administration. Under our administration, it is down to 13.9 per cent. In Quebec, under a Liberal administration, it was 12.9 per cent in September 1984. Under our administration it is down to 10.8 per cent. Under a Liberal administration the level of unemployment in Ontario was 9.4 per cent, and under a Progressive Conservative administration it is down to 6.6 per cent. Under a Liberal administration the unemployment rate in Manitoba was 9 per cent. Under our administration it is down at this time to 7.9 per cent. Under a Liberal administration the unemployment rate in Saskatchewan was 8.7 per cent. Under a Progressive Conservative administration it has gone down to 7.3 per cent. In Alberta under a Liberal Government the unemployment