

up for the loss which poor people in the Maritimes will suffer as a consequence of the 1 per cent increase in sales tax? In talking about Challenge '86 might it not have been more honest for the Minister to say that this program, too, has been reduced in terms of the amount of money it will receive this year? Finally, in talking about the Atlantic provinces, and if the Minister wanted to boast, might it not have been more wise to boast about the 3 per cent income tax surtax which every Maritimer and Newfoundlander will have to pay? That might have been a more fair and a more honest representation of the realities which Atlantic Canada will suffer as a result of the actions of this Government.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, beauty is always in the eye of the beholder, as is quite obvious. I could see that hon. gentlemen in the Opposition were not agreeing with some of the points I was making because not only could I see their heads rattling but I could hear them.

With respect to the points the hon. gentleman rattled off a few minutes ago, the unemployment rate has gone down to 9.8 per cent. It is under 10 per cent for the first time in three or four years. Therefore, if there is any diminution in the amount allocated for employment programs in the coming year, surely it is a reflection of the fact that the employment situation is better.

There is some \$800 million allocated for employment and training programs in the coming year. There is \$125 million allocated to the Program for Older Worker Adjustment which will replace the Labour Adjustment Benefits Program. There is a \$100-million-a-year program for a duration of three years which will total \$600 million with matching provincial funds. There are employment initiatives for people receiving social assistance. If he wishes, the hon. gentleman can say that is less. I say it is more and I say that the need is less than the need was and that the need, as the figures show today, will be going down.

● (1300)

We have a Budget that encourages enterprise. It encourages efficiency and reduction of Government spending and it is equitable. The hon. gentleman over there never mentioned the minimum tax that higher income people are going to have to pay of at least 25 per cent, also a part of this Budget. The official Opposition spent 20 years putting exemptions and tax loopholes into Budgets, exemptions and tax loopholes which we are now closing.

As one of the examples of equity in this Budget, we have the 25 per cent tax on higher income earners. It is reasonable to believe that that is not entirely equitable for some of them, but certainly in the context of the whole fiscal system, for the first time a tremendous loophole has been plugged, yet members of the NDP never croak up to say how appreciative they are of this. Certainly members of the Official Opposition do not because they are the ones who provided all these loopholes in the first place.

The Budget—Mr. McCurdy

As an Atlantic Canadian, I am happy to have had the chance to explain to the House what we are doing in Atlantic Canada. I did not have a chance to explain how we doubled spending under IRDA and regional development last year. We are now spending over \$80 million as compared to \$40 million on average in the previous eight years of the Liberal administration. I did not have an opportunity to really go into this matter. If I had, I am sure that those over across the way would have been even more dumbfounded and green with envy than they are right now. I challenge one of them to ask another question, just one other question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Sorry, the time for questions and comments is over. Resuming debate.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor-Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, I really must confess that while witnessing the tremendous oratorical skills of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie), I laughed unashamedly at much that he had to say. Almost everyone listening to his speech was overcome with the humour and the encouragement to laughter that so often characterizes those who are otherwise hurting deep inside. If the Minister of Justice had had to admit during the course of his oration how bad this Budget is, he would have had tears in his eyes. It is a fit substitution to encourage laughter in us and in his eyes. It is a fit substitution to encourage laughter in us and in himself to obscure the deep hurt that this Budget is going to cause him and his Party, and is already causing in the Province of Quebec as reported in the newspaper this morning.

The Minister said that our heads did rattle. Of course, the Minister's head does not rattle. It is so full of nonsense that it has little room for rattling. In fact, the Minister went so far as to subject the Budget of his own Party to *reductio ad absurdum*. I can understand that because when I went home last weekend I called a number of my constituents at random. The judgment that is to be applied to this Budget was expressed in no uncertain terms by all to whom I talked. It was expressed in a very simple, six-letter word, "unfair". The word "unfair" was used by those who themselves will be the victims, the average Canadians. But the Budget was also deemed to be unfair by those who are not going to be subject to the offensive imposition of taxes that the middle-income earners are being subjected to.

Senior citizens are appalled by this Budget that has another devious content, and that is that the average hardworking Canadian who has a hard enough time making ends meet will have to pay the cost for the poor while the rich go scot-free. The Budget is a clear attempt to alienate the average, hard-working Canadian from the poor who are being hurt the most by conditions in the country, conditions which are being perpetuated by the Government.

The complaint of unfairness in this Budget is something that will be repeated again and again. It has been repeated by members of the two opposition Parties and very quietly by members of the Tory Party itself. However, the complaint will come from all across the country until the devils are tossed out.