

anything else one could mention. In short, whether we are thinking of families, of regions, of the corporate share of taxes or of children, at a time when Canadians were looking for more fairness from the Government at last, we got once again just the opposite. I say that enough is enough and it is time to get fair.

In my comments today I do not want to deal with a whole range of matters. The finance critic for the New Democratic Party did that very ably yesterday. In my comments I want to restrict myself to two concerns that, it would seem to me, a Budget in a modern society, whether in Canada or in any other democratic society, ought to have as its central focus. One is the question of the fairness of the tax burden between various elements in society and principally, in a modern industrialized world, the distribution of the tax burden between corporations and individuals. Then I wish to say something about regional development and regional inequities and how they are addressed, or, more correctly, how they are not addressed in this Budget.

I would first like to deal with the question of tax reform and tax fairness as it relates to individuals on the one hand and corporations on the other. What is the reality of the Government's record? I will not provide for the House a great many statistics. I have a pretty strong hunch that most Canadians know what they are by now. The next two or three statistics I will mention are perhaps the most revealing about the inequitable burden of taxation in Canada.

I would remind the people of Canada that one of the reasons this Government was elected in 1984 was that by 1984 Canadians had become sick and tired of the unfairness with which they had been treated, particularly in the last years of the Liberal Government, and they wanted a change. I see that the Minister of Finance has just stepped out for a moment. I know that he will be back.

When this Government first came to power I was one of those, although I happen to lead another Party, who felt that it was good to have a change in Government and that it was good for the democratic process for one Party not to remain in power for 20 odd years but to have a new team of men and women bringing a new set of concerns to the political agenda. I did say as well that I expected some improvement. I regret that when I, along with the rest of the people of this nation, look at what has happened in the last two and a half years, not only have we had no improvement, if anything, things have gotten worse.

● (1330)

I want to spell that out. With the three Budgets from that Minister of Finance taxes on individuals have gone up over 50 per cent. Quite apart from the increasing burden on the average family, the other thing that ought to concern us is that the burden is being increasingly shared by those who are well below the poverty line. Right now you can be only half way up the mark with respect to statistical calculation, with an income half way to the point of poverty, the break even point, where

The Budget—Mr. Broadbent

you are no longer deemed to be at the poverty level, and still you are going to be paying taxes. If there is one thing which ought to be at the top of our agenda, as it has been in Scandinavia and in many other places, it is that people at the poverty level ought not to be paying taxes.

Since 1984 some \$14 billion in additional taxes have been placed on the families of this nation. That is what the Conservatives have done. On the one hand we have this increased burden by way of personal income taxes or a whole series of what the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) has correctly called sneaky indirect taxes. At the same time the share paid by that other major source of revenue, corporations, has gone down by about 18 per cent since the Conservatives were elected.

Then we see in the press today that the Minister of Finance sat down with some journalists over coffee. I do not know who was paying. He talked about, as he is wont to do every third or fourth day, corporate tax reform. He puts a new wrinkle on it each time he talks about it. In his chat yesterday he talked about Marc Lalonde's last Budget in 1983 when a special set of corporate tax exemptions were extended. He pointed out again, I am sure with great earnestness and seriousness, how this is really disturbing the fiscal flow of the federal Government and we really have to do something about it. We have to come to grips with it. I am sure he said to himself, "I have not done anything about corporate taxes in the Budget, in fact I have increased taxes on individuals, but if I talk to journalists now maybe all the newspapers tomorrow will say I am really concerned about corporate taxes and how we have to reform them". Sure enough, he got his stories across Canada that he, the great friend of the corporations, is once again expressing his deep concern that they are not paying their share.

It is one thing to be somewhat facetious and kid about this kind of thing, but apart from standing back and looking at it analytically, as the Minister of Finance is wont to do, the real meaning of this maldistribution of the tax burden ought to be understood. If it is the case that corporations are not paying their share, and I say to the Minister that corporations, like the rest of us, benefit from national highways, nationally financed research and development programs and a whole range of expenditures by the federal Government, that share is being paid by pensioners, farmers, people on unemployment insurance, indeed, by every other Canadian. I say to the Minister it is time to stop talking about corporate tax reform and start acting.

Why is he not doing this? As I understand the Minister, and I want to take his word for it now and give my own interpretation in a few seconds, he is working up to reform. It is a complicated situation. I must say to my friend, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, given the vast range of loopholes introduced by the Liberals I know it can take some time to get rid of them all. I know it presents some kind of challenge. Yet the Minister of Finance, if I remember correctly, first started talking about corporate tax reform late in the fall of 1984. In the Budget of 1985 he had some carefully documented reasons