

The Budget

targets and then introduce strategies to reduce those levels of unemployment. That is not in this budget. It is not in here.

Here is what happened to me personally. I received calls from a number of small businesses in Kamloops. They called and said: "We have not read the budget, Nelson, but what is in it for us?" I told them there were a couple of things, that there would be a network established and so on so they could bid on international contracts. I was told: "I am running a hair salon" or "I am running a welding shop, I am not going to be exporting my services overseas. What is in it for us?" I had to say, with a heavy heart, that there was nothing in it for the average business person in this country.

The unemployed, as my hon. leader indicated, were again hit with this budget. The victims of these government policies have been now hit. It is a strange way to run a government. We accept it, but it is a continuation of what we saw for the last nine years under the Mulroney regime.

I want to give credit to the government on one point. Actually I could give it credit on a number but let us just pick one. When it was changing the unemployment insurance system, it acknowledged that some people would be really hard hit. I am thinking particularly of single parents or low income families with dependent children or adults that they are caring for. Their benefits went up slightly. In other words, there was acknowledgement that some people were hard hit.

Is there anything in here for the 1.5 million kids who are living in poverty today?

Ms. McLaughlin: No. Not a thing.

Mr. Riis: Not a single word, not a word.

• (1325)

What about the public servants? The public service was hit in this budget. As a matter of fact 25,000 will likely lose their jobs over the next three years as a result of this budget. The government said it was going to freeze their salaries once again.

Does it make sense to freeze everybody when messengers or people who shovel snow off sidewalks have annual incomes in many cases below \$20,000 and deputy ministers have incomes in excess of \$120,000? It does not acknowledge the fact that some federal government workers are struggling to simply survive.

The government showed sensitivity when it came to changing UI programs. Why did it not show that same sensitivity to the people who actually work for the government? As somebody said the other day, it is like bombing your own troops.

Show some compassion, show some sensitivity. There are people who work for the federal government right now who quite frankly are just managing to survive by the skin of their

teeth. They are suffering. There should have been an acknowledgement about that in terms of that blanket across the board freezing of salaries.

My greatest disappointment is that a handful of people are probably still drinking champagne. Those are the richest families in Canada who had a special tax loophole provided for them by a previous government, actually by the Liberals which was then updated by the Conservatives. There is not a single tax lawyer or single tax accountant in this country who says family trusts make any sense at all, not a single one.

I remember when the experts were before the finance committee. The financial advisers were asked what they thought of this particular tax exemption. They all thought it was crazy. They thought it was nutty. They thought the government was goofy to do this.

The Minister of Finance had a chance to show that even the very wealthy in this country are going to have to pay their fair share this time under this new government. Did he close that loophole? Oh, no. The government is going to study it. What on earth is there to study about a loophole that everybody agrees is absolutely dastardly?

In closing, it was a missed opportunity. I could go on and hopefully I will have an opportunity later. I must say that those Canadians who were hoping for a change of course from the last nine years of Brian Mulroney are very disappointed after this budget.

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Madam Speaker, I think anyone who campaigned in the last election found out that very high on the priority list of Canadians was the need to address the national debt and the national accumulating deficits. I notice my good friend from Kamloops did not allude to that.

Today I think we know where the Reform would stand. They would say: "Correct that by deeper cuts". I think I know where the BQ stands, if I understood their leader this morning. We did not get a chance to dialogue with him because of the new rule. I think he was saying: "We would be in favour of deeper cuts, that way of getting at the national debt".

I wonder if the hon. member for Kamloops would tell me where the NDP stands in relation to national debt. Were the cuts deep enough, too deep or just right?

Mr. Riis: I think it is fair to say that there were some changes that could have had a very serious impact in terms of deficit reduction. I named one, the closing off of some of the glaring tax loopholes like the family trust loophole, a consideration of a wealth tax. Again, we are one of the very few countries in the world that does not have a wealth tax. These are not going to solve the deficit problem but they would show good faith in moving in the right direction.