

The Budget—Mr. Turner

distributed, thanks to the Canadian taxpayer, at public expense across the country, as part of the Government's propaganda machine, is not entirely irrelevant to the Minister's purpose. However, the speech and the documents do not tell the whole story. It is not the complete picture, at all, of what the Government has done since it came into office.

• (1530)

I had the honour of addressing McGill students a few months ago in Montreal, in the Stephen Leacock Building of McGill, named after one of the famous professors of that great institution and a great Canadian, one of our leading authors, probably the most naturally funny man we have ever had with intelligence in the country. He used to say that a half-truth, like half a brick, is always more forcible as an argument than a whole one; it carries further. I heard a corruption of that Leacock story one time, that a half-truth is like a half a brick; it is easier to throw and it hurts just as much when it lands. Anyway, the Minister is following that advice to the letter.

For example, in his speech he boasts that as a result of tax reform, 850,000 Canadians have been taken off the tax rolls, do not pay any more taxes. That is the first half of the brick. As the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides has pointed out in his speech and in other interventions in the House and elsewhere, the Minister failed to mention the other half a brick. He failed to mention that in the last three and a half years under this Minister of Finance more than one million Canadians have been put on the tax rolls. Even with this phoney tax reform, we are still 150,000 people worse off in terms of taxpayers than we were when the Government took office.

As a result of the Minister's Budgets, the total tax bill over the life of this Government, including direct and indirect personal taxes, will go up, as my colleague has indicated, by an average of \$1,200 per year per person, year after year. The Minister's argument is a couple of bricks short of a full load, but, as they would say down on the farm, it sure was a full load. It is certainly not the total story.

[Translation]

In his haste to claim the credit for the country's economic growth for himself and his Government, the Minister of Finance, probably inadvertently, included a very interesting fact in his speech, namely that Canada's economy started growing again in 1982 under a Liberal Government. It means that all this talk about inheriting a bad situation from a previous Liberal Government was just that, according to the Minister's speech, because he now realizes that our economic rebirth started in 1982 under the Trudeau administration.

Whatever the Minister may say about jobs created by the Conservatives, we have yet to get back to the employment levels we had before the recession. As the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau) pointed out, our unemployment rate is still above the level of 7.5 per cent, where it was before the 1981-82 recession. Our economic growth has been

uneven. The unemployment rate in our disadvantaged regions is still at unacceptably high levels. In Newfoundland, it is still 17.4 per cent, and in British Columbia the unemployment rate is 10.1 per cent.

[English]

As my colleague from Laval-des-Rapides has pointed out, the average earning for Canadian workers, after allowing for inflation, is now lower than it was in 1984 when the Government took over. Take-home pay in constant dollars is now lower than it was when the Government took office.

Let us take another example. The Government has not only given us more taxes, and I will get into that in a minute, but more debt—the deficit and the national debt. The Minister said in his most stately and stentorian voice, as he looked earnestly up into the camera—his coaches were having him on for this document which no doubt is being sent across the country, videotaped at Canadian expense to every area of Canada—“We have restored fiscal responsibility by reducing the deficit and cutting the growth of the national debt”. That is not even half a brick.

Here is a Government which has collected \$22.5 billion more in taxes from Canadians in three and a half years by increasing taxes, yet in the same period it has managed to lower the deficit by only a token amount, an amount which my colleague from Laval-des-Rapides has pointed out was mostly arrived at by juggling the books, playing games with numbers, a little hidden accounting here and there, a few little caches to set aside for the election, rather than real decreases in the deficit or the debt.

Indeed, one of the largest accounting firms in the country, Peat Marwick, in its newsletter analysing the Budget, said that there is an element of sleight of hand to the tune of nearly \$4 billion in the Minister's deficit projections.

In the meantime the national debt has grown astronomically under the Government. Here again the Minister goes out of his way to blame past administrations for his problem and for the level of the public debt. Why is it that the total response of the Government, still after virtually four years in government, is that it is always somebody else's fault? Why won't somebody on the other side of the House, beginning with the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and his Minister of Finance, say: “Hey, we goofed; yeah, we made a mistake”? It is because they have no backbone, no integrity, no honest approach with Canadians.

Let us look at the national debt. Has it gone down under this Government?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): No. Has it been substantially reduced?

Some Hon. Members: No.