

The Budget—Mr. Riis

If a country as rich as Canada has to accept 12.6 per cent unemployment, Mr. Speaker, that is a tragedy.

Some people have called this a pro-business budget, but if we examine it very closely we see that is only half true. It is a pro-business budget for a very select portion of the business community. If you are a healthy corporation making healthy profits you will be able to use the provisions of the budget; if you are producing to capacity there are provisions you can use. But if you are like most small and medium-sized businesses which are struggling to survive as they wait out the recession or depression, experiencing shortages in cash flow and perhaps laying off staff that have been with them for many, many years, if you are simply hanging in there anticipating that the Minister will bring in a stimulative budget to get the economy moving, can you imagine how such people feel today, Mr. Speaker? They have been sabotaged by the Minister of Finance. He has turned his back on the small and medium-sized businesses that have been pressed to the wall as a result of Government induced recession policies. There is very little for them in the budget.

This morning I was going to an early morning television show and so I took a cab. The driver told me that fourteen years ago he left Europe to come to Canada. This was his dream—a country where the unemployment level was 4.5 per cent; it was a “just society”; the “land was strong”; the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was saying he was interested in “full employment for Canada”; inflation was 4 per cent; the Gross National Product was increasing 5 per cent per year and 25-year mortgages were available at 6.5 per cent. This man built a small business while his wife worked in a small factory. They raised three children. Then the Government decided that it needed a recession and introduced policies to induce that recession or depression. It tightened the money supply, increased interest rates, reduced the Gross National Product and increased unemployment. These were the conscious policies of this Government, similar to the policies of Mr. Reagan to the south of us.

This man lost his business, he lost his home, he lost his family. He is now driving a cab in Ottawa. He told me that he is going to go back to Europe because his dream of Canada had been dashed, to a large extent because of the policies of the Government.

In the last few hours we have seen the people of Canada rejected. The Government turned its back on the people. But more than that, the people have been used as pawns in this political game of chess between the Liberals and the Conservatives where employees are not viewed as people any longer but as commodities. People are bought, sold, exchanged, exploited, used and thrown on the garbage heap to become the unemployed.

This economic carnage is the result of a Government policy reflected in its Conservative budget where capital takes priority over people, where maximization of profit takes priority over human dignity. In this Party we regard that as an immoral position for a Government, and as reflected in this

Conservative budget it is anything but what is required during these difficult times.

Earlier I said that a select few in Canada will benefit from the tax provisions in the budget. This is a tax increase budget. It is a budget that will increase taxes for most Canadians in the years ahead. As a matter of fact, over the next four-year period the provisions of the budget will increase the personal income tax revenue to the Government by \$3.5 billion.

What about the corporate sector, Mr. Speaker? Is it going to increase its contribution? In this Conservative budget its contributions are going to go down by \$2.6 billion over the same four-year period.

There will be a 1 per cent increase in federal sales tax and the charges for pay television and cable television will be taxed. This is a desperate tax grab from that group which the Minister claims will be the leader in the recovery program, the consumer. If he is serious about consumers leading or participating in the recovery program, he should have reduced the federal sales tax instead of increasing it.

I believe that the Minister of Finance missed a golden opportunity. Not only did he bungle the process of the budget, he bungled the content. In these difficult times why did the Minister not bring in a full employment option as the goal for the budget? That goal could have put many more Canadians back to work in the short term and in the long term. He should have brought in strategies to accomplish that goal.

Mr. Lalonde: You are the one who laughed at short-term jobs.

Mr. Riis: Canadians were looking for direction, for strong leadership, for strategies to move people off the welfare and UIC rolls.

We needed short-term action to begin to create jobs immediately and to show that we are serious about getting Canadians back to work. We needed short-term strategies to provide money for human capital. We need to invest in our most important resource in the country that, by and large, has been ignored in the budget—the people of the country, our human resource. We should have been providing money for health, education, and developing skills in the workforce, based on the assumption that healthy, well educated, skilled workers would have a high rate of productivity and would therefore contribute to the growth of the country.

There should have been money for reforestation; for affordable, co-operative and non-profit housing; for development of municipal infrastructure; for improved transportation facilities and for environmental protection. In other words, we do not need leaf-raking schemes or people to dig holes and fill them up again. We need short-term jobs that will result in economic development in the country in the years ahead, that will bring revenues into the federal coffers and thus begin to reduce the deficit.

Most important, Mr. Speaker, we needed a long-term job creation strategy as well. The Government should provide an opportunity for Canadians to plan as an economic family, to