

*The Budget—Mr. Riis*

The other thing I wish to add is that members of the Opposition should get out of their folkloric way of thinking. These problems have not appeared overnight and they will not leave overnight. Their thinking is that this problem can be dealt with single-handedly by the Government. It will require a joint effort on behalf of the federal, provincial and municipal Governments, and it will require fundamental changes—

**Ms. Mitchell:** So you're writing young people off.

**Mr. Charest:**—which we are in the process of engaging in.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Questions and comments are now terminated. On debate with the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis).

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap):** Mr. Speaker, I must say at the outset that I was somewhat disappointed when the Minister of State for Youth (Mr. Charest) had virtually nothing to say when the question was put to him with respect to the extremely high levels of youth unemployment in Vancouver, British Columbia, and right across the country. The fact is that when one looks at the Budget one notices that there is not a single mention of what the Government plans to do, or is even thinking of doing, to assist young people who are out of work. I assumed that when the Minister of State for Youth rose in his place to participate in this debate he would have outlined many of the programs he was planning to introduce. Having taken that opportunity one can only assume that he has no plans. We can assume that the Government is prepared to let young people hang out to dry, ignoring the plight which they face. I find that completely unacceptable. Quite frankly, I do not find many things in the Budget which are acceptable. I do not say that there is nothing good in it at all. I will come to the good parts in the last two or three seconds of my presentation.

I wish to comment on what I feel are the very serious shortcomings of the 1987 Budget. There is an old adage that says that if one cannot stand the heat then one must get out of the kitchen. I guess that is what the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) felt when, the day after the Budget, he jumped into a plane and headed for West Palm Beach. He is getting out of the country. Just like the time when the heat came on with all the scandals and he slipped away out of the country.

He is not here during what has to be a critical debate. When he promised to stand in the House and make a statement on South Africa he has not made one. He has not made a statement on South Africa yet. I believe that he will not make a statement on South Africa. I ask Hon. Members to wait and see. Again, we have had promises and promises but when the heat comes on, out he goes out of the country.

I ask Hon. Members to cast their minds back to when the Minister for International Trade (Miss Carney) was negotiating what is probably the most important agreement that Canada will negotiate in this decade regarding the forest industry. She was holidaying on the beaches of Maui. She could not even be here for the final critical and crucial

negotiations. That is the kind of Government we have. When Members of it cannot stand the heat then they get out of the kitchen. Not only do they get out of the kitchen, they get out of the house—they get out of the country. I suspect for a great many Canadians the polls indicate that they would just as soon that the Prime Minister stayed out of the country. I believe 22 per cent is the last official barometer reading with respect to the number of people in Canada who, when the question was put with respect to whether or not they would support the Government, said yes. The other 78 per cent said no. That is a pretty damaging comment when one considers that it comes just two-and-a-half years after the public gave the Government the largest mandate ever given a Government in Canadian history.

• (1540)

The Prime Minister explained why the people of Canada are feeling as they are. A few days ago on February 11, 1987, the Prime Minister said:

These are difficult moments, obviously. We will be judged by the manner in which we responded.

That is exactly what is going on. The people of Canada are judging this Government on the way it is responding to some very critical economic problems that are facing Canada.

When I listened to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) delivering his Budget Speech, I was left deadened by the impact. There was nothing in it. As some people said, it was a "do nothing" Budget. We were expecting some leadership, direction and initiative by the Government during difficult economic times, and there is none of this in the Budget. The Minister of Finance could have issued a short press release, put it in the mail, and announced the two or three tax increases that will affect every Canadian, and that would be it.

However, in looking at the Budget, an appropriate term to call it would be a "fudge-it" Budget. There is a great deal of fudging going on today. For example, the Government states that unemployment is coming down. The Minister of Finance has said dozens of times in the last few hours that unemployment decreased last year. Technically that is true, because a year ago today the unemployment rate was 9.8 per cent. Now it is now 9.7 per cent. So over 12 months the unemployment rate has decreased one-tenth of 1 per cent. Surely to goodness that is nothing to brag about. As a matter of fact, I would expect the Minister of Finance to be embarrassed for suggesting that they have been successful as a Government and have brought down unemployment. I am certain there is no person in the House who would say that decreasing unemployment one-tenth of 1 per cent over 12 months is appropriate, and is at all acceptable. We are led to believe that unemployment is coming down. Well, it is, but by an infinitesimal amount.

When we listened to the Minister of Finance talk about economic growth, we heard him state that it is on course and on target. What course is it? What target is it that the Government is looking at? When I look at the figures put out