

The Budget—Mr. Harris

Persons making the minimum wage will have their taxes increased by 25 per cent in the period 1984 to 1990. That is a 25 per cent increase in taxes for people who live on a minimum wage. That is the kind of policy the Government has pursued. That is not fair to the average Canadian. The only ones who really benefit from tax reform are the wealthiest Canadians, those who earn over \$100,000 a year.

It is not fair to Canadian families, it is not fair to the regions of Canada, particularly Newfoundland, to have to endure a disparity which has not got better since 1971. It is during times of prosperity that we look to the Government to introduce these programs. Do not wait until we are back into a recession and say we cannot afford it. It is now, when there is a sense of prosperity across the nation, that we look to the Government to say that now is the time to spend the necessary money to ensure that regional disparity is reduced or eliminated.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, I have several questions. The hon. gentleman neglected to mention in his remarks this afternoon the efforts the Government is making to help overcome regional disparity. He neglected to mention that on Monday a new federal-provincial agreement was entered into with Newfoundland, signed by myself, the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Siddon), the Premier of the province and the provincial Minister of Fisheries. That agreement deals with the inshore fishery and contributes \$60 million to the well-being of the roughly 30,000 inshore fishermen of Newfoundland. There has never been a similar agreement signed to assist the inshore fishermen.

Ms. Mitchell: What is the question?

Mr. Crosbie: This is a prologue to my question. That money is all new spending, contrary to the bleatings and blitherings and, might I say, false statements of the NDP in Newfoundland.

The hon. gentleman might tell me why it is that the leader of his Party in Newfoundland, Mr. Peter Fenwick, consistently misinforms the public? He tells what can only be described as falsehoods and makes false statements such as the one quoted in the evening *Telegram* of February 24 where it said that about two-thirds of the funding in the five-year agreement was old money for the continuation of existing programs. That is a completely false statement. Every cent in the agreement is new money which will be spent in the year starting April 1, 1988. Why would the leader of his Party in that province make such a completely false statement and try to fool the people into thinking that this is a repetition of money already spent on existing programs?

I want the hon. gentleman to answer another point. How can he complain about a lack of attention to regional development in the Atlantic provinces when we have increased spending in the Estimates for ACOA? Why does his Party support the legislation with such faint praise? In fact, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) said his Party was going to vote against the legislation. As a matter of fact, the NDP did

vote against spending on regional development earlier in this session. Why did the hon. gentleman not acknowledge the fact that ACOA will be spending \$306 million, I believe? I do not have the figures right before me. Some \$200 million of that is new money for new programs and \$106 million is going to be spent on programs which were earlier administered by DREE. Even with respect to those DREE programs, spending in Atlantic Canada this year is going up from \$196 million to \$228 million when you take into account the ACOA programs which they have taken over and those still left with DREE.

Why did the hon. gentleman not mention and congratulate the Government on the increases in regional development spending in Newfoundland? When we came into power in 1984-85, spending under those programs had gone down or diminished to something in the order of \$42 million a year or less. Our spending this year is between \$66 million and \$70 million, which is an appreciable increase, and totally ignores the money that has been spent under the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

• (1730)

Why did the Hon. Member fail to mention a number of new expenditures in Newfoundland, including the just completed flume tank? That is not a fume tank like the fume we hear from the Opposition, but a flume tank. As a matter of fact, on Monday the Premier of the province and I jointly started the operation of the flume tank at the marine institute, \$8.5 million expenditure to make the marine institute one of the leading educational institutions—

Mr. Orlikow: On a point of order.

Mr. Crosbie: The hon. gentleman is rising to apologize for attacking the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, is it permissible under our rules for the 10-minute period for questions and comments to be taken up by one Member? Surely the Minister can enter the debate and make his own speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is no doubt that the Minister has a lot to say. I would ask him to conclude so that we can give a chance for the Member for St. John's East (Mr. Harris) to reply.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, I accept that as a fair point. I thought the hon. gentleman was going to get up and withdraw his opposition to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency which, as I understand it, he said in debate his Party would vote against. Perhaps he is ready to make a confession that he was wrong.

Let me conclude by asking my colleague to acknowledge that there has been a great increase in the attention paid to Atlantic Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador in the last