

The Budget—Mr. MacLellan

inclusive of the tax that was imposed in this Budget. That 5 cents per litre is equivalent to 23 cents per gallon. This amount is higher than the amount of excise tax proposed by the former Minister of Finance, the Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie), which he was planning to impose in his Budget in December of 1979. He wanted to impose an 18 cent per gallon excise tax. The Government has increased the sales tax. The sales tax also applies to gasoline. There will be a 1 cent per litre increase, which is incredible.

What does this mean? It means that the average Canadian family of two adults and two children will pay \$1,200 more in taxes today than it was paying when the Conservative Government was elected in September, 1984. This is not getting to the problem of ordinary Canadians.

The speaker who spoke before me talked about the unemployment rate and how the Government wants to see equal opportunities throughout the country. That is not happening. There are not equal opportunities throughout the country. In fact the opportunities for certain Canadians are becoming fewer and fewer. The Member who spoke before me talked about the unemployment rate being 8.1 per cent nationally. In Nova Scotia it is 12.1 per cent. The Hon. Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell) said that according to her own tabulations in her own constituency the unemployment rate there is 27 per cent. In my constituency on Cape Breton Island the unemployment rate is 21.1 per cent. It is higher by far than when the Government took office in 1984.

Yet what do we get from the Government? We get the general pronouncements with respect to its strong economic performance. This leads to the apology that perhaps this does not apply across the country, that there are certain areas the Government would like to see a little better off economically. That is all we get.

There is always an asterisk in the Budget about how it is too bad that certain areas of the country are not doing better economically, that certain people in certain areas are more prone to unemployment than people in more prosperous economic areas. That is just not good enough. The Government has been in power now for three and a half years. It is high time that something was done to correct the regional disparities, not making them worse than they were before.

We see continuing evidence that the Government does not care. It says that it will do something and immediately thereafter it says that it forgot all about it. It says these things for public consumption hoping that certain words, phrases or promises will stay in the minds of Canadians. Canadians might have been predisposed to think of these niceties when the Government was first elected, but they will no longer. They know that the words of the Government are hollow and that it does not mean anything that it says when it comes to helping low income Canadians and those living in areas of regional disparity.

What has the Government done? The Minister of Finance started off with his first statement which was not a Budget. It

was an economic statement that he put forward in November, 1984, in which he started to slash programs, including programs that were very necessary for Canadians.

One thing that bothered me in the energy field—something which bothered me then and continues to bother me now—is that the Government slashed programs which helped Canadians save on their energy expenses. Why would a Government do that? That certainly hits low income Canadians. The Government did away with those programs and said that they had never served their purpose. In effect, the Government said, "We are going to get away from actually throwing money at Canadians. We are going to promote programs but we are not going to give away money". It was right about one thing, it certainly did not give away any money. However, it has not been promoting programs either.

The difficulty is that those programs were important to Canadians. Conservation was the most successful aspect of the former Liberal Government's National Energy Program. That program saved Canada 75 million barrels of oil per year. That is something important to consider. It is important to take the strengths of a program or of a country and to build on them, not to destroy them. Destroying them not only does away with the program but hurts the people who the programs were intended to help. In most cases those people are low income Canadians. Not only does this affect the ability of people to pay for their energy, it also affects their ability to stay in their own homes. The conservation program was important in terms of allowing senior citizens and low income Canadians to remain in their own homes.

That was not the only program the Government destroyed. It reduced substantially the Registered Home Ownership Savings Plan. It also cut back on RAP which was an important program giving assistance to Canadians who wanted to stay in their own homes. Not only is my constituency an area of high unemployment, it is an older area as well. It is important that people who are in their homes are able to fund repairs for their homes because if they cannot then they cannot stay in their homes. They will be condemned. What will happen then? They will find themselves without a place to live or the Government must provide public housing. Today, public housing costs between \$40,000 and \$50,000 per unit. Where is the advantage to Canadians? Where is the advantage to the Government?

The Government promised jobs. It has made many statements. Yet in the Budget the Government does not say what it promises to Canadians. It does not give an accounting of what it has said, showing us what has been delivered on. The Government ignores that. It ignores the promises it has made. It has gone on to make new promises. It wants to make further promises, which of course it has no intention of keeping.

It is important that Canadians know that the Government is not resolving their predicaments at all. What the Government is doing is trying to see what is its best position before going into another election. In the upcoming election Members of the