

Hansard but I take his point to be that the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), in his opinion, is too young, too youthful, a mere child, and not of sufficient status to form a government. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition will be 40 next June. I can say from my personal experience and observation, being beyond that milestone, that the law of diminishing returns sets in well before that date. With the greatest respect to the hon. minister, I can think of no better age for a person to take over the office of prime minister than the magic mark of 40.

Mr. Speaker, I had the honour in Nova Scotia of establishing the first province-wide legal aid program. I did so with the help and support of a dedicated group of young lawyers who were full-time employees of the program.

My experience with those young people taught me many things but, most important, it taught me this: the young people of my province and of Canada are ready, willing and able to respond to the challenges of the day. The hon. member opposite will never convince me a man of forty is too young to govern.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I should like to describe to hon. members very briefly my constituency of Halifax-East Hants so that I may describe the budget and the performance of the government from that perspective. The Halifax county portion of the new constituency contains two of the fastest growing communities in Nova Scotia; I refer to Sackville and to Bedford. The residents of these communities have shown active and dedicated interest in the development of their areas. Before much more time passes, I expect that these communities will attain town status and may even become cities. In any event, because of the dedication and work of those concerned citizens in each community, I know these areas will become models of good urban development. Certainly, I will do all I can to assist them.

There are other equally progressive communities in my constituency which stretches from the Atlantic ocean near the famed Peggy's Cove to Cobequid Bay on the Fundy Shore. We have typical Nova Scotian rural life in East Hants county and we have the finest of residential suburbs in the city of Halifax area. I am proud to say that the new premier of Nova Scotia is an elector in Halifax-East Hants. I know the support I received from his provincial constituency of Halifax-Atlantic, and I want to record my thanks to the residents of that area and to all the electors of Halifax-East Hants for electing me as their parliamentary representative.

I have spoken, Mr. Speaker, of problems of regional disparity and their resolution and I mentioned my special concern for and interest in the young people of Canada. For my own constituency, let me say this: this budget offers nothing new and nothing progressive and nothing that will change our situation.

The tax benefits are not the kind that will filter down to the market place in such a way that economic activity will be generated. In terms of buying power, the amounts involved will not alter the life-style which already is below the standard of

The Budget—Mr. Crosby

the national average. I believe the gulf will be widened rather than reduced.

What we require, Mr. Speaker, as I have said, is a national strategy and a national assault on disparity. Failing that, we, in the Atlantic region, require more direct aid and assistance. It might be said that this kind of help is available through the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. As many know, DREE is the successor to a long line of government institutions designed to help the maritimes. I well remember the great hopes we had for the Atlantic Development Board. Unlike that misadventure, I think DREE, as a legitimate department of the government, can help.

It must be remembered that government departments are designed to perform functions. DREE's activity is geographical—it cannot assist the areas it is intended to aid if functional decisions are made in the Department of Transport, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce and other departments which destroy the programs designed to benefit deprived regions. Dree must be given a better foundation and a stronger voice in government decision-making if it expects to accomplish its aims. There is no evidence that the government intends to change its ways in that regard.

Hon. members opposite may say: you want us to cut back on government spending and yet provide assistance to your region. Can that be done, Mr. Speaker? I say it can.

First, you must cut back on government spending in functional areas and in regions where it is not essential to generate activity. You cannot cut spending in the Atlantic region because you will end up spending more on welfare and unproductive benefits than you save on cuts.

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Second, one must examine the kind of expenditures that are being made and assess the economic value of the expense. There is no member of this House, and, I suspect, not one Canadian, who cannot catalogue many items of unnecessary and useless government spending. If these funds were redirected to economic development, the Atlantic area would prosper.

I am not forgetting the vast amounts required for Petro-Canada, Nordair and other ventures.

I do not want to end on a pessimistic note. There is hope for Halifax-East Hants and Atlantic Canada. That hope is a new government which will look more kindly on us and move to correct the imbalance and disparity which now exists.

I said earlier, the Leader of the Opposition will celebrate his fortieth birthday on June 5, 1979. If our electors give him a proper birthday present and allow him to form the new government, I am sure he will respond to the needs of our people with responsibility and concern.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Just before we proceed, I believe there may be some disposition for us to continue beyond the ten o'clock hour and have two