

The Budget—Mr. de Corneille

an opportunity to add to my observations. He raised a host of questions in a very short period of time and I hope he will allow me to do my best to try and deal with some of them. I cannot really deal with all of them.

First, he raised the question about the fact there is so much more employment, not less. I pointed out that there is more poverty, not less than there was in 1981. There is no reason for us to rejoice in that.

• (1210)

With regard to the jobs about which the Member speaks, it is one thing for the Government to talk about the fact that it has increased the number of jobs so greatly since it came into power. The fact it does not want to mention is that it came into power at a time when we were coming out of a recession. The Government came into power at a time when there was economic growth throughout the world.

Despite this opportunity, the Government has still not brought us back to the level of unemployment which existed in 1981. In August, 1981, the Canadian level of unemployment was 6.8 per cent. We have not returned to that figure yet, even though we have had a period of growth in the economy throughout the world. The Government chooses to use figures from a period of world recession and compare its record with that. We have never heard the Government compare its figures with those before the recession.

The Hon. Member asked why we talk about the \$116 billion increase in the national debt. We speak about that because it constitutes an incredible new burden on the average Canadian in that the total debt divided by the total population—what we call the per capita public debt—has increased from \$7,000 for each Canadian when the Government came into power to \$11,250 per person within a few years.

There has, therefore, been an incredible increase in the national debt under the Government. In three and one-half years it has gone up 66 per cent over what it was in the previous 100 years put together. The accumulation of our national debt over 100 years was \$116 billion and it is now \$176 billion.

It is true that at the rate at which the Liberal Government was spending money when it took over all kinds of problems could have been projected, including a larger debt. However, the reason the Liberal Government was spending money at that particular time was to provide social services to those who would otherwise be in hunger and poverty during that depression or recession. I think most Canadians were pleased that the Government acted responsibly and tried to help those who were weak and poor by underpinning their concerns. In the long run, Canada made a good investment in its future through that kind of support program.

I do not know whether I have dealt with all the points with which the Member wanted me to deal, but as a quick final point, the Member asked what Liberals or I would do. Well,

there are some things which this Budget could have done, one being to deal with the present rate of interest. If a lower interest rate is afforded by the present opportunities which we have with regard to our relationship with the Americans and their interest rate, this may possibly fuel an increased number of jobs, a better economy, and a lower deficit.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Speaker, in the Hon. Member's speech we have heard the voice, allegedly, of the little Canadians. I think we all want to speak for the average Canadian because they comprise the vast majority of our population. However, instead we have heard a cleverly disguised endorsement from the socialist wing of the Liberal Party of the little Canada concept, the timorous Canada concept.

I listened with rapt attention to the Hon. Member's skilled sketching of the worried woman from New Brunswick. I wonder whether he has thought about the future of her children and her grandchildren if Canada lacks access to markets, if the Ganong chocolate company, for example, is forestalled from gaining access to the richest market in the world and Canada remains the only major industrialized power without unfettered trade access to a market of at least 100 million.

I wonder whether the Hon. Member truly understands the attitudes of Canadian farmers, particularly western farmers, who see the free trade agreement as an opportunity and not a threat. The farmers of western Canada in particular see this trade agreement as a liberation manifesto.

The images which the Hon. Member has put to us are rather distorted, rather dramatic—people stacked like cord wood, 18-wheel trucks invading us across the border. I submit that this is not so much a Budget speech as an anti-American diatribe.

Can the Hon. Member tell the House how many Canadians he believes will be affected by means of job adjustment through the free trade agreement and how many Canadians he believes normally change jobs in the course of a year? I believe that it is estimated that 25,000 Canadians per year will be affected by the free trade agreement and will require retraining, to which the Government is committed, compared to 5 million Canadians who annually change their jobs in the normal course of events. Could the Member comment on that please.

Mr. de Corneille: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that question. Obviously Tories simply cannot think in terms of the average Canadian. They cannot wrap their minds around that, as the comments of the Member show. He is still talking about whether there will be winners and losers and how many. He failed to hear what I said when I said that Canadians want their Budget to deal with those who will be the losers. He cannot hear that. He keeps saying that there will be winners and that the grandchildren of the woman from New Brunswick will prosper. That does not help her. That does not give her dignity.