

The Budget

clear away all the attempts to short-circuit and create smoke-screens.

Let me give some clear indication of our commitment to job creation. The leader of the Reform Party wanted to know what we are going to do about it.

The infrastructure program has been part of the budget, 65,000 direct jobs and perhaps close to 130,000 indirect jobs as a result. The youth service program has 17,000 as a first estimate. By an interim program to help get young people from school into the workplace we are talking about 60,000. On the reduction of the UI premiums alone, from a statutory requirement to be raised to \$3.30 by 1995 will be brought down to \$3.00 which in itself will create 40,000 jobs.

On a rough total, my mathematics are pretty simple, that adds up to over 180,000 to 200,000 jobs forecast by direct initiatives of this government alone.

We believe that will set the climate in which the private sector can respond. It will begin to set the engine rolling, it will begin to put a catalyst in the system so once again people will no longer have the insecurity of not knowing where the jobs are. They will know they have a government that cares where their jobs are and that is going to do something about it.

When we hear all these cherry-picking criticisms, let us not forget the central task that we have to begin to mould our programs, our initiatives and our policies around that central fundamental issue of how to get people working again.

Let me talk for a minute about the unemployment insurance changes. Members opposite have made a great deal of effort to try to distort the actual meaning of what took place. How can they distort the fact that in every single consultation that the Minister of Finance had, in every single meeting right across this country, we heard small business say to us that if we reduce the premiums, if we begin to reduce the burden of the payroll tax, if we begin to show for the first time that we are prepared to give small business a chance, it will go out and create work for Canadians?

That is exactly what we have done. We have started a contract with the small business community across this country to say: We are beginning to do our part, now do yours. That is the message in the budget.

• (1525)

To give one example, if there is a small enterprise of 100 employees, the net effect of the changes announced by the Minister of Finance would be a net saving to that employer of \$30,000. There is one new job all by itself. What is wrong with that and why do members opposite oppose creating another new job in a small business?

I want answers from them because they have not given them so far. All they are asking is how do we keep people on unemployment insurance. They do not ask how we put people back in the work place. That is the question they should be asking themselves.

Certainly we have made a very clear linkage between one's work history and the amount of benefits provided. Some ask why. I would like to cite a couple of examples. It is time we began to break that sense that UI itself has become part of the wage scale of so many Canadians.

I have a copy of a letter written to the Minister of Finance from someone living in a small town in British Columbia. The letter says: "The people in this town do the necessary work and then refuse any further work until next year. They feel that the only time they need to work is to build up their UI claims and that they do not feel the need to do further work". The sad part about this is that they say their children are beginning to do the same.

We are building a culture in which we are saying that the only requirement is to get a bare minimum of 10 weeks and then one can be on poge for the next 42 weeks. There is no relationship between work and benefit. We believe that unemployment insurance is crucial. It is a vital program. It is an essential program but it shall not be used to provide a replacement for work. It should be simply—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): That is what the members opposite want us to do. They want to perpetuate a system that is killing jobs in this country and destroying the incentive to work.

I think it is disgraceful at this time when there are so many unemployed Canadians that we have an opposition that says keep them that way, do not try to put them back to work.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, that is the position of the Bloc Quebecois. It prefers unemployment to jobs.

[English]

The fact of the matter is we have also said that we will begin to change our system to respond to need, that we recognize there are large numbers of people in that system who need special assistance.

Again we changed the UI program to ensure that those who have the greatest need will receive the greatest benefits and we have raised the benefits.

Some journalists yesterday asked me how we are different from the Tories. When we changed UI conditions we brought down benefits as a result to change work. When we changed benefits we made sure those most in need had the highest level of benefits.