

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of Ministerial Statements, Government Orders will be extended by 17 minutes, beginning at one o'clock.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from Thursday, March 6, 1986, consideration of the motion of Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There were four minutes remaining in the question and comment period following the speech by the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria). Further questions or comments? Resuming debate.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to visit Newfoundland last week, as I frequently do, to promote the Budget. I will not say that I was defending the Budget because I found it was not necessary to defend it, only to explain those parts with which people may not be totally familiar. It is one of the finest Budgets ever presented to the House. I will not mention any of the possible exceptions, out of modesty, but it is a Budget based on the concept of enterprise, efficiency and equity. I will explain that as I go along.

My remarks are devoted to showing the kind of preferential treatment that we are offering Atlantic Canada. My theme will be that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) is like Prometheus bound, because he is faced with the desperate fiscal situation left to him by our predecessors. He does not have much room to manoeuvre but where he has any room he has exercised his discretion to help Atlantic Canada, lower income people and the small business part of the economy in this country, because that is where the jobs are created.

First, I do not have much to say about the pitiful orations we have heard from the Official Opposition during this debate, including the depressing spectacle presented by the Leader of the Opposition in this debate. Rather than give my opinion, I will quote an impartial source. Jeffrey Simpson, a non-partisan person, had this to say in *The Globe and Mail* on March 5:

The Liberals' response to the Budget offers further depressing evidence that hypocrisy and political opportunism are thriving on the opposition benches.

He said:

The Liberals prefer everyone to forget that they are the architects of the slide from a balanced budget to a \$36-billion deficit. Rather than inducing in them a pinch of modesty, to say nothing of shame, their shoddy stewardship of the nation's economic affairs is now conveniently ignored.

The Budget—Mr. Crosbie

Party leader John Turner, upon returning to public life, knew how shoddy that stewardship had been. He pledged repeatedly that if elected he would halve over seven years the federal deficit, then estimated at about \$29-billion.

He goes on to point out how the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) came under the influence of Senator Keith "Gravy" who changed his mind on what he should do. The article goes on to state:

The Liberals are now criticizing Mr. Wilson for a "massive tax grab," especially on low-and middle-income Canadians. But what is their alternative?

What is their alternative? Not once have we heard an alternative from the ragtag, tatterdemalion remnants on the Liberal benches. We know the alternative of the New Democratic Party; we have heard the same croaking alternatives for 15 years. However, we do not even know what the alternative of the Liberal Party of Canada is.

Mr. Simpson ended his article by stating:

Liberal arguments merely reflect the party's grievous intellectual inconsistencies, to say nothing of flagrant opportunism and blatant hypocrisy.

A measured editorial writer from *The Globe and Mail* is making that judgment. Is it any wonder that poor Jean Chrétien had to flee from the grievous intellectual inconsistencies, the flagrant opportunism, the blatant hypocrisy and the depressing evidence that hypocrisy and political opportunism are thriving on the Opposition benches? It is a wonder that he could stomach it for so long.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: I will leave the tatterdemalion ranks and make some positive comments.

I wish to address myself to Newfoundland because this is a part of the country that is certainly one of the more regionally deprived areas. Since September, 1984, 6,000 jobs have been created in Newfoundland. The figures are even better for the end of February. The total number of jobs created by our predecessor, between February, 1980—when the Liberals deceived themselves back into power after defeating the second greatest Budget of the century—and 1984 was 2,000 jobs.

The unemployment rate in Newfoundland has fallen by 4.6 per cent since the election; from 23.8 per cent in September, 1984, when we took office to 19.2 per cent at the end of February. The Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker) has the gall and audacity to get up in the House and talk about jobs. The unemployment rate in Newfoundland while the Liberals were in power between 1980 and 1984 rose by 10 per cent. That is an astounding figure. Yet we hear these paragons—these sump pits of hypocrisy—asking questions about the job figures during every Question Period. The unemployment rate in Newfoundland rose by 10 per cent between 1980 and 1984 but has already gone down 4.6 per cent in the 18 months since we took office. The Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) deserve a pat on the back because their record, compared to the miserable record of our predecessors, is absolutely Hellenic in its brilliance.

Let me give the House some more statistics. In December, 1985, manufacturers' shipments in Newfoundland were up by