

The Budget—Mr. de Jong

All things considered, Mr. Speaker, that is a sharp reduction and we cannot accept that young people be penalized by a Government which could not care less about this group that makes up 22.6 per cent of the Canadian population.

Mr. Vincent: Mr. Speaker, I will try again. It doesn't seem to sink in. The Budget is not an instrument for giving away goodies to certain groups in our society. The Budget provides certain sums of money for each department, and it is up to the responsible Minister to spend that money in the course of the year. The Minister of State for Youth will make his own announcements when appropriate. It is not up to the Minister of Finance to announce in the Budget what is going to be done for our youth this year. And I see my colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. McKnight). There was nothing in the Budget about Indian Affairs. However, in the months to come, the Minister will be making announcements that concern Indians. That is what the Hon. Member fails to understand, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to point out that for the first time in twenty years, a Government has given a forecast of its expenditures and at the end of the year, the forecast has proved to be correct, and we have been doing this for three years running. It is the first time, Mr. Speaker. It involves administering the country like Canadians administer their family budget and like companies administer theirs. When they say: We are going to spend X thousand dollars this year, they spend X thousand dollars. For twenty years, the Liberal Government failed to balance its budget. We, Mr. Speaker, have done so, and I think that is important.

Finally, I can assure the House that the Minister of State for Youth is doing excellent work for our young people and that he has the support of the Quebec caucus and the national caucus in this respect.

● (1200)

[English]

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, I rise to participate in this debate on the Budget presented earlier this year by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson). I rise in opposition to the Budget for what it did and did not do. It extended the federal sales tax to snack foods, such as granola bars, frozen yogurt, peanuts, health food mixtures, popcorn et cetera. The snack attack is a tax on food eaten mostly by children. That is why some people have called this tax the kiddie tax. As well, the Budget increased excise tax on gas by one cent a litre and it increased the tax on tobacco products by another 4 per cent. This means that for middle and low-income families taxes are up another \$60 to \$100 a year. When you pile this tax increase on other tax increases which the Government has introduced since it came to power some two and a half years ago it means that for middle and low-income families taxes are up by \$1,350 over that period of time.

Let us deal with what the Budget did not do, Mr. Speaker. It did not address the problem of regional disparity. Since

January, 1986, 137,000 new jobs have been created in Canada yet 132,000 of those jobs are in southern Ontario. Only 5,000 new jobs were created in other parts of the country. The problem of regional disparity is tremendous. Yet the Government since it was elected has cut back by some \$3 billion the money previously spent on regional economic development, so we can see why regional disparities are increasing and we can see why most of the economic activity and jobs are centred in southern Ontario.

The Budget did not deal with the crisis facing agriculture. Farm net income went down 27 per cent in Saskatchewan last year. Projections are that farm net income will be reduced by a further 10 per cent to 20 per cent this year. There is a crisis occurring in western Canada. There are thousands of farm families on the brink of bankruptcy. The whole way of life of the family farm in rural western Canada is on the brink of disappearing. Yet there was nothing in the Budget to indicate that the Government recognizes the tremendous problem that exists in our region of the country. There was no commitment, not one word by this Government on any program it might have in mind to offer some assistance to those farmers to ensure that family farming as a way of life will be preserved in western Canada. There was no acknowledgment whatever of the problems we face back home. In addition, the Budget does nothing to create jobs and assist the poor.

As I was preparing for my remarks in this debate I received a study that was done in my home city of Regina by the food bank. It is called "*On the Bread Line—Hunger in Regina*". I would like to enter for the record some of the findings of this study. It states:

Hunger is a significant problem in the City of Regina.

People are hungry when their regularly monthly income is inadequate for the purchase of sufficient quantity of nutritious food for themselves and members of their families.

Our best conservative estimate is that there are at least 3,000 hungry people in the City of Regina. Three thousand and five men, women and children used the Food Bank in January 1986.

More than half of those are children. The study also shows that hunger is primarily a family matter in Regina with the majority of food bank users being children. Some 59 per cent of food bank children have both parents, while 35 per cent lived in households headed by single women. The ability of food banks to provide this service is also under stress and strain. For example, in 1985 the Regina Food Bank received and distributed more than 1 million pounds of food to hungry people. However, the amount contributed per person has fallen from approximately five pounds per day in 1983 to 2.3 pounds per day in 1986.

● (1210)

The study goes on to document the problems hunger creates, particularly among children. It shows that school nutritionists say that children in school meal programs are underfed, undernourished and hungry. They suffer from hindered motivation, reduced attention and awareness, restlessness, and