

Oral Questions

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I want the Minister to recognize that the cries coming from the regions of Canada are non-partisan in nature. They represent the voices of Canadians who feel neglected by an uncaring Government. Why did the Minister of Finance not bring in a Budget for all Canadians?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition has it wrong yet again. I have to remind him, because his memory or his attention span is very short, that we have introduced the Atlantic Enterprise Program, the Atlantic Opportunities Program which is generating \$600 million worth of new purchasing from the Government of Canada into Atlantic Canada, and the Cape Breton Special Investment Tax Credit. The regional investment tax credit has been maintained. We have the ERDA agreements with all the provinces of Canada.

I encourage him to read *The Globe and Mail* editorial today which talks about the extensive support that the Government has given to the Western Grain Stabilization Program, to the Wheat Board through the Farm Fuel Tax Credit, and through the changes in the measures that we have made to support the energy industry. The last paragraph states:

—the present Government does not have a failing grade.

It would be nice to see some fair recognition of the facts.

In the interests of fairness, surely the Hon. Leader of the Opposition can recognize that.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I want to tell the Minister of Finance that he not only tested my attention span, but the whole country's during his budget speech.

• (1125)

COMMENTS MADE BY PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATIVES

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): May I cite Premier Brian Peckford: "We don't see anything here which encourages us to look at 1987 in a positive way"? How about the Hon. Dick Johnston, the Treasurer of Alberta: "In Alberta we are extremely disappointed with the reaction of this Budget"? How about the Hon. Yvon Poitras of New Brunswick: "It does not address regional disparity"? That is the kind of opinion we are receiving.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): The Hon. Leader of the Opposition is very much aware of the processes which are now under way. The Prime Minister has a report coming to him to review the various regional development programs in Atlantic Canada with a view to establishing an agency which will be located in Atlantic Canada to deal directly with those problems, and we are discussing them with the New Brunswick Government as well as with the other Governments in the Atlantic Provinces.

The Deputy Prime Minister has work under way dealing with the problem of western industrial diversification to ensure

that we can make changes which address the problems which are faced by western Canada on a permanent basis.

We have decided it was not appropriate to rush these reports just to get them in in time for a budget. Those decisions will be taken within the context of the fiscal plan to deal directly with the problems to which the Hon. Member has referred.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

IMPACT OF GASOLINE TAX INCREASES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Raymond Garneau (Laval-des-Rapides): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday the Minister added another cent to the tax on gas, which means a total increase of four cents since this Government came to power, the equivalent of 18 cents per gallon. Yesterday, Shell announced its decision to increase the price of a litre of gas by two cents.

My question to the Minister is as follows: Does the Minister believe that the Canadian economy and Canadian consumers can absorb a three-cent increase in the price of a litre of gas in just one week? And does he believe that our regions, that the neediest regions will be able to absorb this kind of increase without a corresponding increase in unemployment?

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member would agree that when we came into office the price of gasoline in his own province was 60 cents. I am advised now it is something in the order of 50 cents or 51 cents. That is quite a drop and is one of the reasons there has been good growth in the Quebec economy.

I have some quotes here, but I don't want to embarrass the Hon. Member.

Some Hon. Members: Go ahead!

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): There are quotes here. All sorts of doom and gloom have been rained down upon us every time we have come forward with an Economic Statement or a Budget, saying 50,000 jobs and 100,000 jobs and 150,000 jobs would be lost. The Leader of the New Democratic Party has made it up to 200,000 jobs in one of his predictions. In the face of that, 677,000 jobs have been created, and this growth is going to continue into the next year.

[Translation]

Mr. Garneau: Mr. Speaker, the impact of this Minister's economic policies has been such that over the last 12 months, 12,000 jobs have been lost outside Ontario, across this country. In other words, there has been a net loss outside Ontario.