

The Budget—Mr. Vincent

Now, they look across the House and say: "What is the solution?" The solution is this: perhaps they would like to turn the reins of government over to us. I am sure that with the 83 members on this side of the House we could come up with a better solution than what we have heard in the Budget tabled in the House. I promise you, Mr. Speaker, that we would bring the Budget in on time without any floods.

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to my colleague from Thunder Bay—Nipigon. I heard him speak in the House. I have listened with care to his vision and the Liberal Party's vision of the country. I have learned a great deal from the Hon. Member about the true nature of the country. I like to talk about the country being a nation of regions, each distinct. I found out that the northern part of Ontario is a distinct and important region of Canada. As such, many times in other parts of Canada we look at Ontario and see it as the fat cat of Confederation.

However, when we see what transpires in this House and when we listen to the important debates that take place here, it becomes increasingly obvious that regionalism does not just hit the West and East. It also hits the northern part of Ontario. One thing we saw in the Budget and about which I would like to ask the Hon. Member is a picture of the Government which only a few short months ago said that regional development programs were safe. Members of the Government said that they were a sacred trust with universality, old age pensions and family allowances, for goodness sakes. We found out just how sacred they were. We know now that over the next five years there will be up to \$1.2 billion cut from the projections for regional development programs. We have heard the Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency say in the House that in the short term, a three-year period—a lifetime in the regions—there will be some difficulty in funding regional development agreements.

What I would like to ask my colleague is exactly how the \$1.2 billion in cuts to regional development programs will affect the vision of the North as a full participating partner in the economy of the nation.

Mr. Comuzzi: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. It gives me a chance to discuss in some detail regional development in northern Ontario.

Like the area which my hon. friend represents, as with many other areas in the country, in northern Ontario we depend on regional equity in order to enhance our communities. The Atlantic provinces, northern Ontario, most parts of Manitoba and other areas rely on regional assistance.

In answer to the question, let me say that we do not have any regional assistance. In 1988 a funding program by the name of FEDNOR was started. It was funded up to \$55 million, which is a pittance when one talks about regional development and the wealth of northern Ontario. It is a pittance when we consider our mines and what they have produced for the national economy. It is a pittance when we consider what our forestry industry was worth before the export tax. It is a pittance when we talk about what the pulp and paper industry in northern Ontario produces for our national economy.

We do not get one iota of assistance from the Government other than that \$55 million in FEDNOR which has already been committed for \$12 million. I might say that it is spread over five years. Thus it amounts to a \$12 million subsidy to enhance industry in northern Ontario.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, you can see that the Conservative Government has ignored the people of northern Ontario.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Vincent).

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, I am happy to speak to the Minister's excellent Budget. Since we have been debating that Budget for a few days, it is perhaps time to set the record straight and, at the same time, go over what the Progressive Conservative Government has accomplished since 1984.

I'm sure you will remember that Minister Wilson tabled Budgets in November 1984, May 1985, February 1986, February 1987 and February 1988. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that in those five Budget debates the Liberal Opposition said roughly two or three things. Firstly, we would lose jobs in Canada with those Budgets; secondly, inflation would skyrocket; thirdly, we would get