

The Budget

the goods and services tax is not the alternative that is going to be acceptable.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Young (Gloucester): What my hon. friend should be asking his constituents is whether they are for this alternative that his government has proposed, rather than going to people and saying: "What's your alternative?" This shoe does not fit. Canadians are not going to wear it.

It has become absolutely clear that the Conservative government is not interested in regional fairness. We face a crisis in Atlantic Canada. The Prime Minister promised to help. He came to the House and said: "Yes, we will be generous. There will be a generous aid package." Yet in the budget there was not a word about the east coast fishery and not a word about a special aid package. The bottom line yesterday for Atlantic Canadians was that there is not a penny to help them cope.

This government is getting out of the business of regional development. That is the underlying premise in the budget yesterday. It does not have enough courage to say what it is doing. It says one thing and does another. ACOA, western diversification, FEDNOR and regional development programs will no longer provide assistance to the regions in the form of grants. Oh, no, no more grants. Now we are going to lend money. Now we are going to make sure we are going to get it back. That is fine.

If you want to get out of regional development because the Americans are telling you to do it, say so. There is nothing wrong with that, if that is what you believe in. What is wrong is saying one thing and doing the other.

We well know that when the free trade agreement was being negotiated one of the targets was grants and subsidies under regional development programs. Again the Government of Canada is sacrificing the interests of the regions and sacrificing the future of Canadians because of the free trade agreement.

Simon said: "Don't worry. They are not on the table. Don't worry about unemployment insurance. We've got that taken care of. Don't worry about regional development. Don't worry about grants and subsidies." Simon

was right. The Americans did not have to worry about them because the Conservative government got rid of them. That is absolutely disgraceful.

Now we come to the decision that was amplified today by the Minister of State for Privatization and Regulatory Affairs: the government's last-minute decision to sell Petro-Canada. That is further evidence of the absolute disintegration of this government's will to govern in Canada as a sovereign government. It is another loss of a lever that allows us to control our economic destiny.

This is in the face of increasing foreign ownership that is coming at us from every direction. We could talk about the American Express Bank proposal. We could talk about what happened with Esso and Texaco. We could talk about so many things, but now we are talking about the ownership of a key Canadian industry, a sector that is fundamental to the survival of any country that has those kinds of resources.

The government had a chance to take a strong stand and reaffirm at least a semblance of some commitment to Canada and it said no. It was a last minute, knee-jerk decision to sell Petro-Canada.

As is clear from comments made as the minister responsible for privatization spoke today, there will not be one penny's benefit to the Canadian taxpayer. More important—and Canadians have to understand this—not one cent as we sell off one of these valuable assets will be applied to the reduction of the deficit. That is because we will be giving it away the way we gave away de Havilland and wound up paying the company that bought it more than it ever expected when it first bought it.

After five and a half years and six budgets presented by this minister, our tax system is more unfair than ever before. Basic services that average Canadians have come to rely upon over the years are being eliminated.

Canadians, including seniors, have to pay tax on interest they earn on their savings even though those amounts of interest may be less than \$1,000. Canadians have had unemployment insurance benefits cut and threatened, premiums have increased and the Government of Canada has withdrawn from participating in the UI program other than to say what we can do. There is control but no money.