

books of the Coast guard because it will show up as \$10 million, but when it comes to the books of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), it will be a lot less. I would strongly suggest that the Government reconsider this kind of approach because areas like the Seaway are of importance to all of Canada. Whether it is coal moving from British Columbia, grain and potash from the prairies, iron ore from the Great Lakes and Quebec or products moving through Atlantic Canada, everyone benefits from having a viable Seaway. Everyone benefits from low cost for the Coast Guard and for the Seaway.

● (1750)

In conclusion, I will say that the Government had a number of alternatives, but it chose the ones which will hurt the majority of people. For that reason, I suggest, ultimately it will lose.

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, I want to take some time this afternoon to outline to the House, to my constituents and to the people of Canada why this Budget is easily as bad as the previous efforts of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson). I would like to place emphasis on three areas which are of particular concern to my constituents and which relate directly to my duties as opposition critic for National Defence. These areas include the support this Government is providing for science and technology, agriculture and national defence.

The Budget attacks those people in our society who are least able to bear the burden of extra taxes and makes virtually no effort to try to ease their plight. The Minister of Finance in the last 18 months has raised the tax burden of the average family in this country by more than \$1,300. That may not seem like a lot of money to Hon. Members opposite who support the boys from Bay Street, but to the average family which is struggling to make ends meet, this extra tax bite means very tight planning. My friend and colleague, the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior (Mr. Penner), pointed out something which I believe, and that is the fact that the national debt must be curbed and brought under control. However the Conservative Government has chosen to use a lot of rhetoric in that regard instead of producing results. The fact is that the national debt has increased this present fiscal year alone by one sixth of the amount the debt has increased in total from Confederation to 1984, and this was done in a period of 18 months of Conservative Government. That is not a very proud record.

During that 18 month period, the national debt has increased by approximately 23 per cent. The cost of servicing the national debt has increased from \$18 billion to \$26 billion. Government Members opposite say: "Oh, yes, but that is interest on the national debt". The Minister of Finance admitted in the House that the \$1 billion the Government used to pay off the banks when they were in trouble was added to the national debt, and that is on the record of this House of Commons. The Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Mulroney), the Minister of Finance, and hordes of Tories with their

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packsacks on, are running around the country telling everyone that everything that is happening today is the fault of the previous Liberal Government. As the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior pointed out, thank God this Tory Government was not in power during the recession years of the early 1980s, which was world-wide and had to be contended with by the Government of the day. If this Government had been in power then, the people would not have been looked after as well as they were. The plan should be to help Canadians during periods of world recession when times are tough, and build up revenues when the economy is good.

There is nothing in the Budget for youth. There is nothing in the Budget for forestry. I mention these because I heard all of those promises which were made day after day during the last election campaign. There is an increase in the tax on gasoline for the trucking industry and, of course, for the average consumer. During our agricultural task force hearings around the province of Ontario and across Canada, we heard demands that taxes be removed from farm implements, fertilizers and so on, but none of these things were addressed. The rebate of 3 cents per litre on gasoline was extended for one year, but why was it not done on a permanent basis if the Government was really interested in helping the farming community?

The Minister of Finance on several occasions has attempted to sell his Budget to Canadians as a tough but fair Budget. Well, it might be a tough Budget, but it certainly is not fair. For example, I and two of my colleagues in the Liberal Party met two weeks ago with some of the victims of the unemployment insurance policies of the Government. After our meeting with the Armed Forces Pensioners' Association, we called upon the Government and the Minister of Finance, in the spirit of fairness, to use the Budget as an opportunity to revoke the Order in Council regulations that changed the way in which unemployment insurance eligibility is calculated and which has resulted in thousands of Canadians being denied benefits to which they were entitled—and to which they were forced to contribute, incidentally.

As a result of this measure, many are forced to live below the poverty line. Some are in danger of losing their homes and some have even lost their homes. They can no longer maintain their homes with their severely reduced incomes. A member of the Armed Forces during his years of service has no choice but to pay unemployment insurance premiums. When I asked the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) about this on March 31, 1985, she said she knew enough to be sensitive to people in that position. A member of the Armed Forces must retire at a particular age. He or she has no choice. Unemployment insurance benefits to them must be a bridge from the time they leave their job in the Armed Forces—many of them in their forties—until they get a new job.

● (1800)

However, the Minister of Employment and Immigration included their severance pay and pensions as income. As a result, they were taken off the UIC rolls or their payments were reduced to insignificance. That is what the Minister did