

The Budget

I have a second question for him. He talked about fairness. He talked about sharing and the fact that this budget addresses the problem of sharing among Canadians. Will he explain to me how a poor person living in Edmonton, a poor person living in Alberta, or one living in Ontario differs from a poor person living in the maritimes? Is not poverty equal all over the country and should be addressed in terms of poverty levels, not whether you live in one province or the other?

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the questions of my friend opposite. In response to his second set of questions, the whole idea of tax reform as we have it before us now is designed to impact favourably on lower and middle-income Canadians. It is a demonstrable fact which no one, including the renowned Liberal finance critic, has been able to rebut. Canadians with an income of less than \$30,000 will be better off after tax reform than before.

Insofar as Albertans are concerned, as the Minister of Finance indicated in the debate on Monday night, the manufacturers' sales tax siphoned \$685 per Canadian, per Albertan, out of the province of Alberta. The goods and services tax will mean a net increase of \$5 for the average Canadian out of Alberta. But in terms of economic growth, and this is what our Liberal friends forget, the tax reform measures moving from the MST to the GST are the greatest net benefit to the province of Alberta, with projected economic growth of just under 3 per cent as opposed to the national average of something under 2 per cent.

My friend refers to polls that were taken following the debate. I was not aware of the one he refers to but I would refer him to the one taken by K 97, another distinguished Edmonton medium, which found that 98 per cent of those who watched the debate found that they did not believe the Liberal finance critic. They did not believe him, let alone saying who won the debate.

Now, if you were to examine the Edmonton Convention Centre floor you would find that even the most distinguished caretaking and custodial staff have not been able to remove the gore of the Liberal finance critic from that floor.

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased at the opportunity to express my concerns regarding this budget.

Along with my colleagues I am honoured to represent in this House the voice of Canadians whose needs and concerns have been ignored by the government in its plans. When I look over this budget I see negative, regressive policies in almost every area. What really jumps off the page is the way that a supposedly national government is making the most vulnerable groups of Canadians bear the brunt of its mania to cut the deficit. These groups include veterans, women, natives and people who live in geographically and economically isolated regions of Canada.

The Minister of Finance is very fond of telling Canadians that we must all join in the effort to cut the deficit and the public debt. Average Canadians suffered under last year's budget and will continue to suffer under this year's budget as well as under other policies introduced by this government.

My colleagues on this side of the House have done a very thorough job of showing how this budget will hurt Canadians without doing much to help our deficit and debt situation, so I intend for a few minutes to discuss several areas of special concern to me and my constituents.

While all Canadians view the government's policies and plans apprehensively, Atlantic Canadians have even more reason to be suspicious of this government's action. In the weeks leading up to the 1990 budget we remembered how our region was hammered in last year's budget. Having given our pound of flesh last year we dared to hope that the government would make some attempt to help the Atlantic region as it enters an economic crisis of unprecedented proportions. I refer not only to the fisheries crisis, but also to our high unemployment level, to the effects that the base closures and reductions are already having on our economic growth, to the slashing of our rail services, to the changes to the unemployment insurance program and to the fundamental sense of alienation on the part of Atlantic Canadians. We feel this way because we have seen no evidence during the past year that the government cares about this region. The failure of the government to include an Atlantic aid package in this budget plus its continued neglect of regional development only deepens the feeling of anger and of alienation.