

Laval-des-Rapides, pointed out yesterday, unemployment in the disadvantaged regions of Canada has risen since the worst year of the recession.

Here are the figures. In Newfoundland in 1982 the rate of unemployment was 16.8 per cent; in January of 1987, 19.2 per cent. In Prince Edward Island in 1982 it was 12.9 per cent; in January 1987, 14.6 per cent. In Nova Scotia in 1982 it was 13.2 per cent; in January 1987, 14.3 per cent. In Alberta in 1982 it was 7.7 per cent; January 1987, 10.8 per cent. In British Columbia in 1982 it was 12.1 per cent; January 1987, 13.6 per cent.

[*Translation*]

How does the Government react to this worsening crisis in the regions? Instead of helping them get through the crisis the Government makes the problem even worse. Funds earmarked for regional economic development went down from \$14.9 billion in 1984-85 to \$12 billion in 1987-88, a decrease of 20 per cent.

[*English*]

The rural areas of Canada are suffering. There was nothing for the farmer in this Budget. The Minister refers to other programs. I remember when a Budget was the time when the Government stood before Parliament and set out the programs for the farmers, fishermen, consumers and the disadvantaged. We have a crisis on the family farm which the Hon. Member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) has just outlined. Farmers are facing bankruptcy. We have the lowest prices for the next crop year since the depression, since the 1930s, of which you are well aware, Mr. Speaker. The International Grain Conference, where there was a hope we would receive some rationalization in the anarchy on international grain markets provoked primarily by the European-American confrontation in San Diego, was a shambles. It was a disaster. Yet the family farm gets nothing from this Minister.

The Tory message to Canadians living in the Atlantic Provinces, in western Canada and in northern Canada is, "If you don't like it. Tough. Move". I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that is not the Liberal view. We are not going to lead a country where we have to tell, or would dare tell, Canadians who cannot find a job in the Atlantic Provinces, in western Canada or in the northern parts of our country, "Move to Toronto; move to Montreal". No, sir, we believe in a country where there is equality of opportunity from one end of the nation to the other.

I suggested yesterday to the Minister that perhaps he did not understand how this country is put together, from the Atlantic to the Pacific to the Arctic, and that failure to understand, that attitude, displays a sad and dismal perception of the nature of Canada. It also portrays that this Government has no agenda, no plan and no projects to bring about some equality, some equilibrium in the economic advantages of the country. I have heard the Prime Minister, but regional equality is just rhetoric to this Government, and Canadians cannot serve their families rhetoric for dinner.

The Budget—Right Hon. Mr. Turner

The Minister has a beautiful hedge here, tax reform; something that is not on the table before Parliament. "Wait until spring". That used to be a reverse advertisement in Canada. We could see the Minister's ears perk up last year when the Congress of the United States finally passed its tax reform. Sweet sounds came out of Washington, and a reduction of rates. The Minister of Finance could not resist the bandwagon. It was too good to be true. Who could argue? Lower taxes sound wonderful; but I am afraid the Minister jumped on the bandwagon without understanding the music. He said he had a plan. He said he had an agenda. He led us all to believe that he would be following the United States with major changes and major improvements in the tax structure.

● (1250)

Mr. Garneau: He said that?

[*Translation*]

It is true, he said so in July.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Apparently he said that, Mr. Speaker. Am I right?

Mr. Garneau: Quite so.

Mr. Kaplan: That is indeed what he said.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Indeed, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) said last year that he would have specific tax reform propositions to make in his next Budget, that is in this Budget. Where are these propositions, Mr. Speaker? The Minister is asking us to wait until spring.

[*English*]

Although we will distance ourselves from it this morning I suspect we as Members of Parliament may be party to a massive fraud on the Canadian people, encouraged and perpetrated by the Minister of Finance of the Tory Government. Let me explain why. Fairness has not been the watchword or the overriding principle in this Government's approach to taxes in its previous Budgets. Why should Canadians trust the Minister now? Why should Canadians believe the Government now? Why should Canadians feel that the Government will be fair in tax reform? The record does not give us any encouragement.

What the Government is not talking about is the other side of the coin. What exemptions and deductions will be eliminated in order to allow those basic tax rates to come down? I think the Minister assumes that to be credible tax reform, it has to be fiscally neutral. Will the basic personal exemption be cut? Will the exemptions for senior citizens, for dependent children or RRSPs be cut? Only the Minister knows the answers to these questions, and he is not talking. He gives us a hint here and there. The press shared a sandwich with him yesterday and he threw out another little teaser. Maybe we will know more in the spring. Maybe that paper will not hit us until the summer.