

The Budget—Mr. Riis

● (1550)

I think it is appropriate to read into the record some very important statistics that point out just how effective government policies have been. We all remember only too vividly the depths of the recession, and in many parts of Canada the depression-like conditions that existed in 1981-82. Then the unemployment rate in Newfoundland was 16.8 per cent. Today it is 19.2 per cent. Things have worsened in Newfoundland. In Prince Edward Island during the depths of the recession the unemployment level was 12.9 per cent. Today in P.E.I. it is 14.6 per cent. In Alberta, part of the world that you know well, Mr. Speaker, the unemployment levels in the depths of the depression and recession were 7.7 per cent, and today they are 10.8 per cent. In British Columbia, during the depths of the recession the unemployment rates were 12.1, and today they are 13.6 per cent. I have mentioned only four provinces. I could mention them all because the situation is virtually duplicated across Canada. In seven provinces today the unemployment levels are higher than they were during the deep recession of 1981-82.

For most Canadians the situation has actually worsened. There are 1,342,000 people who are officially recognized as being unemployed, men, women and young people in search of work. You and I know that this figure could be inflated significantly because these are the official statistics. The number is down by 5,000 from last year. We are very happy that some jobs were created across Canada meaning there were 5,000 fewer unemployed than in January, 1986. But that is only 5,000 out of 1.3 million. At this rate, if we were going to accept it as the approach to fighting unemployment, we would have to wait 270 years before we actually obtained full employment.

The unemployed and under-employed across Canada were certainly not impressed with this Budget. I cannot find a single thing in the Budget that will result in a single job being created anywhere in Canada. I can find a number of areas that will likely result in job loss. When you add more taxes on gasoline, diesel and aviation fuel, on airline travel, on food that people purchase on a weekly basis, on alcohol and tobacco, we have calculated that all this would amount to about \$70 a family each year in additional taxes. And that results in job loss. It means that \$60 million in the snack food list alone will not be there for circulation in the economy.

We are very concerned that the Minister of Finance did not see it appropriate to even mention the word poverty in his Budget Speech. There are four million people in poverty, which is a tragic figure—

Ms. Mitchell: One in every five children.

Mr. Riis: The Hon. Member for Vancouver indicates that one in every five children lives below the poverty line, not at the poverty line but below it. By our own statistics as a Parliament we find that four million people live below that line. While the Government spends days and days and weeks and weeks talking about banking centres, the food banks

continue in the major cities and smaller communities across Canada. Thousands and thousands of men and women in 1987 have to line up to obtain a package of food to take home for their families.

With that situation occurring in Canada, how can the Government stand passively by and raise taxes and take no specific initiative? This is why some of us felt that we were betrayed as Canadians by the lack of action in this Budget. I have not mentioned the gas tax and the impact that this will have on the ability of our tourist sector. I did not mention the fact that the gas tax is discriminatory against the regions of Canada. After all, which regions use aviation, diesel fuel and gasoline more than others? The western, the eastern and the northern regions of Canada do so. The gas tax is a discriminatory tax.

In spite of repeated promises by the Prime Minister to improve child care across Canada and to provide adequate funding for the development of child care, no mention was made of it. I have not had a chance to say much about what I call the abandonment of the family farm and ranch. There were no provisions to ensure that long-term low-interest money was made available to the family farm and ranch across Canada. Again, I did not hear anything about any special western or eastern development fund. I remember hearing from the Liberals about the famous Western Development Corporation that never saw the light of day.

In summary, all the Minister of Finance has promised us, after promising it to us in 1984, 1985, 1986 and now in 1987, is that he will eventually get to tax reform in whatever form that might take. I do not hold my breath when that comes from the Minister of Finance who failed to close off the \$500,000 capital gains exemption to all loopholes, with the exception of farmers, homeowners and small businesses. We are the only country in the world that has exemption on that *carte blanche* basis.

In closing let me say that it is time we had a Government that put full employment at the top of its agenda as its goal and introduced strategies in the regions right across Canada to ensure that every man and woman would have an opportunity to be fully and meaningfully employed at a job that would contribute to the benefits of Canada, see Canada grow and ensure that our sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters will have the same opportunity.

Mr. Thacker: Mr. Speaker, I have a personal question for my friend opposite. It relates to the people standing in soup lines, something we all believe to be atrocious. Would the member support a Bill that would take away from himself and myself—making \$75,000 a year while people are standing in soup lines—the family allowance? Is he prepared to give up the tremendous benefit of the personal deduction for himself, his spouse and his children in order that people in soup lines can get more?

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member will know that if we had a proper tax system in the country that reflected an