

The Budget

budget is simply more than an accounting sheet of expenditures and revenues, it is more than simply totalling up taxes and outlays.

It does represent a direction, a purpose, a blueprint and that is, in large part, where our debate should focus. It is important to me because perhaps this budget more than any demonstrates the clear distinction in philosophy and political belief that is polarizing this country in part but certainly setting out major distinctions.

I also think it demonstrates the lack of reality and the lack of sincerity in coming to grips with the very substantial underlying strategic problems taking place in this country.

Let me just present a couple of examples. We are a country that is increasingly finding itself built on two levels, a split level society. The Economic Council said it best. I cite the Economic Council because certainly no one could ever accuse it of being a Liberal think-tank. In its latest report "Good Jobs and Bad Jobs, it states that the regional disparities in Canada are growing wider, that as we go into a service economy, close to 78 per cent of all new jobs will take place in four or five major urban centres.

That leaves a lot of Canadians dispossessed. It leaves a lot of regions of Canada on the outside. It leaves a large part of this country totally outside the job market. How did the Minister of Finance deal with that in his budget? He basically shut down regional development programs. He took the regional development agencies like Western Diversification, ACOA, and others and turned them into lending agencies. They are no longer development agencies. They are now banks. If you are big enough and have enough assets, sure you can get a loan. But if you are a small entrepreneur in a small community in the Atlantic or in the interlake of Manitoba you do not have the same capacity. You need a start-up and that will be denied.

Rather than offering at least some small semblance of gesture toward regional disparities as outlined in this document of the Economic Council, the Minister of Finance goes in the opposite direction. He does not seem to be looking at that reality that is staring him in the face that we are a country where most of the growth and activity is concentrated in one, two or three major urban centres.

That has enormous portents for the future of this country. It means the idea of building a country from sea to sea where there is a sense of belonging in every single part of Canada gets erased. The message is that you have to be in a big city, or one or two big cities in order to prosper.

While I am at it, let me point to another reality as presented by the Economic Council. It points out that the job market in the last five or six years has substantially altered, and that about half of all the new jobs, which this government is always standing up and being so proud about, are temporary, part-time jobs.

Mr. Nicholson: No way.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): It says it in the document. I would suggest that Conservative members learn to read, because there it is. I cite it: "Good Jobs and Bad Jobs, published by the Economic Council of Canada. Forty per cent of all the new jobs are part-time placements or temporary jobs. Not only that, but the disparity in income is growing wider. Look at this figure in terms of the so-called income base of the middle class of Canada. It has gone down from 34 per cent to 29 per cent in a matter of about eight years.

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The middle class is shrinking and we are getting one job market for highly skilled, high techs or service stock broker-type people who get high incomes, the BMWs, the fancy condos, and the expense accounts in Florida, but people in the other parts of Canada are suffering and their incomes are dropping.

What do we see in the budget document? What we see actually written in the document is that the Minister of Finance is predicting an income decline for Canadians. That is something we should take confidence in? In the document itself the government is predicting that there will be a personal decline in income.

Along with that reality of the growing disparity in incomes, which the minister does not address at all, is the growing burden of the taxation which falls upon the middle class, which is seeing its income drop. Those are not my figures. They are from the Economic Council of Canada.

So the middle class is losing income and paying more taxes. In the meantime, as the budget document itself points out and I cite specifically documents of the government itself—the Economic Council and the Department of Finance—which also point out that in the last five years, since 1984–85, the corporate burden of taxation in relation to the revenues of Canada have