

The Budget

I think if a person wins \$5 million on a lottery they would not mind paying some tax on that. I do not think anybody would say that is an unfair request.

The question of a minimum corporate tax that we have often discussed in this House is something that deserves examining. In other words a whole number of changes to the tax system would generate an awful lot of wealth.

This budget assumes that the deficit will be brought down, which we all support. No one in this House would say we do not have a serious debt crisis and a deficit problem and we have to take steps to get it down.

This budget assumes that because of the steps taken there will be economic activity occurring and then general revenues will flow to the central government. That is a fair summary I think.

However, as my leader indicated, when one person is unemployed or underemployed or afraid of being unemployed, if one is living on social services, one does not have enough disposable income to make much difference. That is what we require. We must get people back to work. I know my friends opposite when in opposition said the same thing. It is critical. If we are to pay down the deficit we must get people back to work so that they can contribute and not be a drain on those revenues.

● (1330)

I do not think the budget will put people back to work. I do not rely only on my own observations. I have listened to the experts who responded to the budget. I have yet to find anybody who says it is going to put a lot of Canadians back to work.

We have all sorts of unused capacity. I remember the figures given earlier this week for manufacturing losses in the province of Ontario alone because of unused capacity and the new technologies. They are simply not putting people to work.

This is why the budget has been such a disappointment. There is nothing in it to give hope to those people who are unemployed or to those people who want to see a meaningful new direction in terms of putting people back to work.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre): Madam Speaker, I followed the debate with great interest all morning. If I were confused this morning, I am even more confused now.

Earlier we heard two presentations from the Reform Party. One was saying how we did nothing and there were not enough cuts. The critic for the defence ministry indicated that we cut too much. Now I am hearing something else again. I do not know what it is.

Did we cut enough? Did we not cut enough? We want to entice businesses to hire. The \$300 million rollback on the UI will entice companies to hire.

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, we in the House would all agree that the area the government has supported in the past to a certain degree and needs to support more in the future is the area of high technology.

What do we find in the budget? We find the abandonment of the KAON project in British Columbia. I see some of my British Columbian colleagues across the way. That project would have put Canada on the cutting edge of high technology. It would have been a vote of confidence for our scientists and our top engineers in the country and around the world.

The Conservatives slapped British Columbia in the face by abandoning the *Polar 8* icebreaker. This was to be the federal government's show of support for B.C. KAON was the same and the government let down KAON. Literally hundreds of millions of dollars that would have gone into creating jobs in the construction area and, most important, in the high tech sophisticated scientific engineering area have now been abandoned. It is very disappointing that we missed this opportunity.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Madam Speaker, the finance minister's budget speech, that could be described as "Campbell meat with Martin sauce", reflects the vicious circle of irresponsibility the federal government has got stuck in.

The Minister of Finance did not allow himself to do the job he has been elected to do. During the whole election campaign, he said "jobs, jobs, jobs", but when the time comes to create them, he is not there. Instead, he forecast a record deficit of \$39.7 billion, and a new series of committees. There is a disease in Ottawa, the "committee disease", which I have rarely seen so rampant anywhere else.

The election slogan has fallen by the wayside due to the timidity of a finance minister who has given in to the federal bureaucracy. How then can politicians ask voters for their confidence when, every time, government parties promise one thing during the election campaign and do the opposite?

This budget will contribute to increasing the differences and disparities between the various regions of Canada because, under the guise of the infrastructure program, the federal government is cutting the budgets of the development agencies without giving the provinces any leeway to take over their own development.

The federal government is courageously taking on the weakest in the system by raising the minimum number of weeks of work required to be entitled to UI benefits and bringing down to 55 per cent benefits paid to unemployed workers. That is a Valcourt plus formula. What is worse, they assume that people do not want to work.