

Government Orders

meet our different needs and have outrun our ability to pay for them.

This budget sets the stage for a historic modernization and restructuring of Canada's social safety net over the next two years. The goal of this reform is to provide modern and sustainable programs that respond to contemporary needs like skills training and incentives to work.

The budget takes a critical first step toward this broad goal by initiating concrete action in two major expenditure areas: unemployment insurance and federal transfer payments to provinces in support of social programs.

Rising unemployment insurance premiums for business are a major obstacle to job creation. The changes to UI announced in the budget will lower premiums and provide the creation of more jobs. As the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said: "It is a huge incentive for small business to create business".

In the recent past federal action toward the provinces appeared to be based on a strategy of sneak attacks, confrontation and denunciation. This led to federal-provincial relations increasingly charged with tension. This budget rejects this approach. Instead it provides for predictability and modest growth in equalization transfers during the timeframe for social program reform.

Throughout the course of the reform process the federal government will work with all of the provinces to redesign our social programs. We will co-operate in studying reforms and testing new approaches with extensive consultations with the public to receive their input along the way.

In the province of New Brunswick we recently announced co-operation agreements between the federal and provincial ministers to find new ways for making a better Canada: a youth jobs strategy program at CFB Gagetown to allow young people between the ages of 17 and 24 to receive skills training in different trades; the New Brunswick job corps program which provides a guaranteed income for participants in return for volunteer services. This program is targeted at individuals over the age of 50.

As the finance minister for Newfoundland said recently, all of us and every province in this country have to be part of the solution to the Canadian problem.

The spirit of federal-provincial co-operation I have described extends beyond the budget measures relating to social security transfers. Despite the co-operative and constructive approach this budget takes toward the provinces, some hon. members have expressed concern about the regional impact of specific measures. As a member of Parliament from Atlantic Canada, I believe I can bring an important and constructive perspective to this critical issue. I say this because we in

Atlantic Canada realize the scope of the national problem and we know that to correct it, tough decisions have to be made.

We know we must look forward to the new opportunities provided for in this budget, opportunities like the infrastructure program and our experimental job corps, opportunities that get business working in the proper climate to create the jobs and economic security we need for the 21st century.

We in Atlantic Canada recognize the importance of taking control of our own destiny. We are spearheading the move to lower interprovincial trade barriers and have truly free trade Canada within Canada.

In concluding, I would say that this budget has been described as a road map to the future. It takes measurable, bottom line action to help build the future opportunity and solid growth. It does so with rigour but also with compassion and creativity. Therefore I urge all hon. members to support this bill.

● (1740)

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed I did not get to make some comments to the hon. member across the way. I know he was looking forward to that.

I just heard the hon. member for Fundy—Royal talking about the merits of the budget. There were a couple of things that sort of struck me which I have discussed with other members in these debates.

First of all I would like to say the statement made by the president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, as the member pointed out, rang about the same bell as that of the chairman of one of the major banks during the referendum debate when he said that in essence the world is going to end if the Charlotte-town accord did not pass. Of course we saw that did not come about exactly.

The member is saying that this gentleman has said that the Liberal budget is on the right track. I wonder just exactly where that track leads to. There are a couple of inconsistencies. The member talks about all the different job creation programs that the budget is going to bring about. I wonder if the answer to the unemployment problem in Canada to the Liberal government is simply to put everyone who is unemployed on a government program.

I am sure those people would rather have real jobs. I go back to my earlier comments about where real jobs come from. They come from the private sector industry that has confidence in the fiscal responsibility of the government.

That is what this government has to show and it has to show it by cutting spending in real and positive terms. This has not happened.