

*The Budget—Mr. Tardif*

economy. Until then, I am asking the government to act quickly in order to provide, and provide quickly, concrete assistance to hundreds of workers who have lost their jobs.

There is in fact an excellent program that was announced in this government's previous budget, which provided for a \$350 million fund to provide relief to workers who were suddenly without jobs. Asbestos and the workers in the asbestos industry want our attention and above all, they want financial aid. The provincial government's attitude to workers in this sector has been passive and indifferent. It has spent or will spend more than \$100 million during the next few months without creating a single job. I say, with due respect, that our government can and should intervene on behalf of these workers through the fund I just mentioned. The Canadian government should also pursue and intensify its efforts to develop markets for asbestos, an industry that provides very well-paid jobs. Although asbestos is of prime importance to the economy of my riding, since it provides jobs that are much sought after, obviously because of the wages offered workers in the mining industry, another activity sector in my riding that is just as important is the footwear industry.

I agree that the wages are somewhat lower than in the asbestos industry. Nevertheless, this is basically an essential industry. The footwear industry now needs very specific measures to safeguard its market. We have to look ahead and develop a good quota formula. The wish to replace the footwear industry by high technology industries offering higher salaries is certainly worth while, but this could have disastrous results for several constituencies, including my own.

Indeed, the footwear industry is very decentralized and has plants in over 60 constituencies in Canada. Is it realistic to hope for any industry to settle in as many constituencies as that? The reason is very simple; investors usually look for densely populated centres in which to invest. I therefore believe it essential to regulate imports so as to allow manufacturers to produce according to their capacity, which will create thousands of new jobs.

At the present time, this manufacturing sector provides employment for nearly 20,000 Canadian workers divided equally between Ontario and Quebec. Until quite recently, these workers met about 43 per cent of the Canadian demand, while the various companies have the capacity to meet over 60 per cent of the demand. What is extremely interesting is that if the industry were to produce at full capacity, this would automatically result in the creation of thousands of new jobs.

In December 1980, the government renewed the quotas for a year. Presuming that the quotas would be abolished very soon, the importers glutted the Canadian market with imports, taking a large share of the market away from Canadian manufacturers to such an extent that their share is now estimated at 37 per cent and lay-offs now exceed 3,000. In these circumstances, it is a matter of extreme urgency to take aggressive action to protect adequately the Canadian market

for the benefit of Canadian footwear producers, and this in the best interests of manufacturers, workers and consumers. A lack of protection for this major manufacturing sector of the Canadian economy would eventually result in the loss of thousands of jobs and the complete disappearance of this sector. And finally, which is also very important, the consumer would be at the mercy of importers.

After these few comments about the two major concerns of my constituency and of hundreds, and even thousands of my constituents, I would like to deal specifically with this budget, which affects and will continue to affect all Canadians including all my constituents. In the weeks preceding the budget speech, the opposition was clamouring for it, probably being convinced that the budget would be in its favour and would enable it to improve its increasingly dull image. The opposition then believed that the budget would reduce the purchasing power of Canadians which had already been eroded by inflation. It perhaps imagined that the government was trapped. In other words, the opposition believed that it would capitalize on the budget. Finally, the Progressive Conservatives saw the budget as a means of scoring a few points with the Canadian voters. But the budget contains nothing of the kind, quite the opposite! The Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) understood that it was essential to help the Canadian people who are hard hit by the ill of the century, namely inflation. He certainly could have increased taxes significantly on the one hand and redistributed revenues on the other by creating all sorts of programs. But he did not fall into that trap. On the contrary, he preferred to show confidence in Canadians by reducing significantly the tax burden for 5.8 million taxpayers with a taxable income over \$11,120.

Mr. Speaker, who are the true victims of inflation? Which Canadian men and women suffer most from inflation? They are the low wage earners, the middle class, the Canadian men and women who work in mines, in the footwear, the textile, the clothing or the paper industry and agriculture. The great majority of these taxpayers have no way of protecting themselves against inflation even though some collective agreements contain provisions to that effect. These same taxpayers are not able to claim the equivalent of the loss in their purchasing power. They have to hear it without any kind of protection by depriving themselves of things which for a number of them are simply essential. Think of those who sign a two-year collective agreement without a COLA clause. There are many such people in Canada, especially in my constituency, and their reduced tax burden will allow them to cope better with those distressing economic circumstances.

This Liberal government has realized how important it is to set forth clearly and permanently the meaning of two significant concepts: equity and justice. Thus, the budget gives a real meaning to those two important concepts, as evidenced in several sections. I remember rather well the last Progressive Conservative budget. I agree that some aspects of that budget could have seemed rather generous. On the other hand, the