

The Budget—Mr. Mongrain

ting me in a position where I could see the emptiness of their interventions, when they said only that there was unemployment—everybody knows that, of course—that the economy is going through difficult times—we are all aware of that also—and that the government is doing nothing. I would have expected really constructive criticism and that instead of blaming the government they would have made useful suggestions.

I was listening earlier to the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) who made quite a vigorous speech. I agree with a good many of his views but not with all. For instance, when he repeats constantly that the Bank of Canada could solve our problems, he may be right to a certain extent but that institution is certainly not a gold mine; it cannot cure all our ills.

● (5:10 p.m.)

However, I do not want to dwell on that too long. Instead, I wish to take him to task, he who denied earlier indulging in demagoguery or electioneering, claiming that he was doing rather something constructive, for having suggested that the \$100 million in subsidies that the government will grant to western farmers would be somewhat unfair, at the expense of the rest of Canada. I think that was a mean remark. However, I appreciate the intellectual honesty of the hon. member for Bellechasse—

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not wish to interrupt the hon. member—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. The hon. member for Bellechasse rises on a point of order.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to interrupt my colleague from Trois-Rivières, but if my remarks have been interpreted as a reproach to the government about western farmers, it is very unfortunate. I never thought so. I said that it could be interpreted by our own people or exploited by others who are seeking to spread discord as likely to create dissension and give rise to prejudice. I want to make myself clear on that matter.

Mr. Mongrain: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Bellechasse for his explanation, but I add that if he had wanted to show absolute intellectual honesty, he would have told the population why the government has granted a \$100 million subsidy to western

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farmers who, this year, will face an unusual problem which does not occur every year.

In extraordinary and disastrous situations such as this one, any government must take unusual measures. Then it must be explained to the Canadian people, especially those in Quebec—where there are so many demagogues who take advantage of such things and misrepresent them totally and unrealistically—that the ten provinces are interdependent and that if some of them, for example, are deprived of a decent standard of living, all the others must suffer for it.

Besides, that is why was established the equalization system under which the province of Quebec will be receiving this year \$350 million, and more next year. Those are the things which must be stated when one wants to be honest. I do not suggest that the member for Bellechasse did it intentionally. It is probably because, as he was running out of time, he knew he could not say everything he wanted to say. I feel that those facts must be told.

[English]

I think, personally, I would be remiss if at the beginning of my remarks I did not convey to the government the gratitude of my fellow constituents, and especially of the three municipal councils that represent the three municipalities which form my riding, for having decided to designate our region, and also for having decided that our region would be specially designated. That is another thing that the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) could have mentioned since his own riding was designated, and specially designated. He could have added a word of thanks to the federal government, even if it is what we call justice distributive in French. It is a fact that the government has made a decision which probably represents the difference between poverty continuing for years and years and the achievement of a certain measure of prosperity, increasing little by little in succeeding years.

[Translation]

As far as the metropolitan area of Trois-Rivières is concerned, it is in a rather strategic position since it constitutes the core of the province of Quebec. It has resources and an economic and industrial potential that are rather important.

For various reasons that I could not enumerate this afternoon, we have experienced during a few years some kind of stagnation. Now, the government has agreed to designate