

The Budget—Mr. Axworthy

list of benefits that will accrue to western Canada, this budget comes out far more on the plus side than the one put forward by the former minister of finance and flabbergab last December 13. It is important that western Canadians understand that because western Canada will in large part be setting the agenda for discussion for debate over the next several years. It is the area where the dynamic growth in Canada will take place, and where much of the employment will occur, even though the hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes), in one of his flights of fancy this afternoon during question period, suggested that perhaps half of the province of Alberta was going to be unemployed. That was one of the most absurd statements that have ever been expressed in this House. It is in western Canada where the employment will continue to be.

I returned from western Canada last night. While I was there I met with representatives of the business community and the oil, gas and mining communities. Their concerns were not that of the member for Calgary West. Their concern was getting more people out to western Canada because they need skilled workers. Their concern was not the unemployment problem but to get more people from the other parts of Canada to work in the mines, the gas fields, and in natural gas exploration.

I would suggest it is about time the hon. member for Calgary West went home and talked to those people and understood what their concerns are, and not suggest something which is being manufactured or generated in his own very fertile imagination.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member opposite is making statements about what I said earlier in the House. I think the record should be corrected. I am implying considerable job loss in eastern Canada—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. The hon. member's remarks do not constitute a point of order.

Mr. Axworthy: Let me indicate what the budget said. Let me point out, first and foremost, that we were responsive to the issues in western Canada by not putting in the budget many of the things being speculated about. There was a great sort of campaign being carried out. We heard such things as, "Look what these Liberals are going to do in western Canada. We will have an export tax". The battle flags were waving and the trenches were being dug purely on the idea of fighting this discriminatory tax. It was a legitimate concern to be raised, and one to which we responded by not bringing in an export tax. I am suggesting that we were prepared to respond to those concerns. We did not totally abdicate the need to get additional revenues for the federal government but we got those revenues in a different kind of way, through a different kind of mechanism.

Also introduced in that budget was a very clear strategy and program for ensuring that the major benefits of the revenues derived and developed out of the new resource boom of western Canada would be recycled back into the west. These revenues would be used for new energy supplies and sources,

for the industrialization of western Canada and to provide for conversion from oil to natural gas and electricity. These are energy sources in ample supply. So any suggestion that this budget ignores the concerns of the west simply means the provisions of this budget have been ignored.

The major beneficiaries of this budget—contrary to the point of view that was being put forward earlier in this House—are the consumers of western Canada and the consumers right across the country. A great deal of heartfelt anguish was being expressed on the part of some members about what was going to happen to the consumer. I will tell you what will happen to the consumers in my province. In 1984 they will be paying \$400 to \$500 a year less to heat their homes and drive their cars under this budget than under the previous Tory budget. That is the difference, Mr. Speaker. That is the real message of this budget. The Canadian consumer will find he is not paying the kind of inflated prices which were being put forward in the December 13 document of last year. It is that money which will stay in the hands of the consumer to buy other goods and services and which will keep the economy going.

Similarly, the farmers of western Canada will not have an excise tax on their fuel oil. They, too, are being saved by this budget. They will not have that kind of burden to carry which would add to their costs and, therefore, to the cost of food and agricultural products. That was avoided by this budget as compared to the document put forward by the so-called defenders of the west.

There are a series of major stimulants in the budget for the growth of industry in western Canada. I find it hard to understand why the Tories persist in assuming that the only agencies for the development of our energy fields must be multinational corporations. Why is it the Tories assume that it is impossible for Canadian-owned companies to become the major shareholders, the major entrepreneurs, the major enterprisers in the development of our oil and gas and our energy resources? What they are doing basically is defending the corporate system, instead of defending what should be the real opportunity, which is to develop new businesses in western Canada to provide for a whole new network of enterprise and activity through the incentive grant program. This is something that was not offered in the previous budget.

So, if we are comparing budgets and comparing measures, the opportunity for Canadian businessmen in western Canada to get an advantage and a step up in developing those resources, is in this budget. There are nothing of that kind in the previous one. It is out of that kind of incentive program, based around the idea that it is far more effective in our energy system to have Canadian-owned enterprises and companies, that we can avoid the massive transfusion of funds out of Canada which amounted to \$3.5 billion in the past two years. That money could be kept in Canada working to develop new energy supplies and resources.

Mr. Hawkes: One-fifth of the interest paid on the public debt is paid to foreign countries.