

The Budget—Mr. Maltais

the time to examine these Budget proposals, we would find things that are positive.

I am saying this, Mr. Speaker, because that is our custom. I have been a Member of this House for five years, and the custom has not changed. As soon as one side of the House says something, the other side immediately retorts that we should have done the opposite. I agree with Hon. Members and the public that the measures being proposed may not necessarily be the only possible solution, but they deserve to be assessed on their merits, without being dismissed out of hand.

What did the Minister of Finance announce in his last Budget? He simply announced measures, in addition to those proposed in the February 1983 Budget, aimed at balancing the budgets of Canadians, of small and medium-sized businesses, and of retired Canadians, with particular emphasis on the latter. Furthermore, among the benefits provided for Canadians, the Minister of Finance has once again made funds available for creating jobs for young people. Mr. Speaker, coming as I do from an economically depressed area, I always tend to agree when I hear Hon. Members opposite say that the deficit is too high. I always feel that governments can spend too much. However, if the Hon. Members would come to the North Shore once in a while, they would realize that some regions, and not only on the North Shore but also in Northern Quebec, in Northern Ontario, as well as in the Maritimes and especially in Newfoundland, have some catching up to do, considering that before the recession hit, other areas such as big cities were given many advantages. In our sparsely populated areas, there is a serious lack of infrastructure. There is a serious shortage of office space where officials can provide essential services and that is why members both on this side and on the other side of the House are constantly asking the Minister of Finance for improvements in our well-being and economic conditions. And if the Minister of Finance really wants to meet the needs of the various areas, of economic and political interests either at the provincial, municipal or other levels, he has to provide more money in his Budget.

Mr. Speaker, it is so easy to criticize a budget especially when it shows a deficit. However if the Hon. Members opposite would consider how those funds are directly earmarked as far as the various departments and regions are concerned, they would find, much to their surprise, what can be done in the short term and the long term with the funds provided in the budget. Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Manicouagan, I have asked for a lot of money and I have also suggested many medium and long-term projects for the economic development of my region. Even in my own constituency, some people were skeptical at first about the undertakings of the National Harbours Board at the cost of some \$42 or \$43 million. Nevertheless, such major infrastructure, which I suppose will contribute to the deficit, will enable the Sept-Îles and Port Cartier area to attract other economic projects. Such facilities should normally be used for a 25, 30, or 40-year period. That

is called "borrowing against the future", Mr. Speaker, to make sure that the present is economically viable and that future generations may use such facilities for regional development.

It might be suggested to the Minister of Finance not to invest in similar projects which, seen from metropolitan areas, may not appear to generate all the anticipated economic activity. But, back home, we call this "fighting an economic catching-up battle", for our area needs diversification as well as facilities to compete with other areas both in Quebec and the rest of Canada.

As far as air transportation is concerned, Mr. Speaker, the same phenomenon exists throughout Eastern Quebec. I have indicated to the House on many occasions how expensive it is to travel by air on the North Shore. I should like to remind the House that a return ticket, second class, between Blanc Sablon and Montreal costs \$695. Clearly, a return ticket between Montreal and Paris casts a lot less. The trip between Blanc Sablon-Montreal, depending on weather conditions, may take an average of two days. And what do Hon. Members from Eastern Quebec want, whether it is the Hon. Member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Bujold), the Hon. Member for Gaspé (Mr. Cyr) or the Hon. Member for Rimouski-Témiscouata (Mrs. Côté)? We want the Government to subsidize air transportation so that the people living in isolated areas in Eastern Quebec or the Maritimes may leave their homes out of necessity to visit health care specialists in metropolitan areas, so that our young people may pursue their education elsewhere. But travelling by air in these areas costs a lot of money. We urge, therefore, the Minister of Finance to grant us money as well as cost equality per 1,000 seats—this is the way we assess transportation costs back home. Mr. Speaker, we request for our areas the same facilities as those which exist already in more-centrally located areas. But this costs money, and money comes from the Ministry of Finance. We, on this side of the House, are aware that this has been a difficult period economically, not only in Canada but throughout the industrialized world. It is important to point out that fact to the people, because it is so easy for the Opposition to blame the Government for mismanagement or lopsided priorities. It is so easy, for those who are not responsible for managing the economy to suggest that if they had been in charge they would have done better.

I would also like to remind the House that I am negotiating with the Schefferville and Sept-Îles reclassification committee, and maybe soon with the people in Gagnon.

• (1620)

Not that I want to cast a stone at anyone. We all know that the global market for iron ore is depressed. However we need government money to get people out of these remote areas without too much hardship. It would be very easy for me to start blaming corporate management of mining operations in my area and score political points, but as a responsible