

laughable amount. I want to put it in context so that it can be understood. On average, it amounts to about \$160 per farmer right across the country. When you look at the average amount of interest now being paid by farmers, the average farmer pays \$7,000, that is right across the country. I get that figure by dividing the total amount of interest being paid across the country by the number of farmers. Admittedly it is a crude way of arriving at it, but it does make the point that the amount of assistance available in the budget to farmers is minimal.

What could have been done to provide some immediate cash flow to grain farmers would have been to raise the cash advances paid to them. Something could have been done with our transportation system so that people would have the chance to earn money rather than borrow more. This government fails to see that in order to attack inflation it must do something besides raising interest rates. If it had any business sense it would know that one of the best ways to attack inflation is to encourage production.

I am a relatively new member of this House. I came here as a result of my constituents favouring me with the majority of votes in 1979, approximately two and a half years ago. In some ways I feel sad. It is not an act of pride to get up in a budget debate and condemn the government that brought down a budget which was not as the Minister of National Revenue said it was. That carries a certain amount of sadness because this is a great country. It has a tremendous potential. Those of us elected to this House have a chance to meet people from different areas of the country. We travel more than we would normally travel in private life.

It is a shame we cannot do a better job of realizing this country's potential. One reason seems to be that we are always fighting each other. I do not think there has been a time in history when we have been so much at war with each other. It is unprecedented that the provinces are taking the federal government to court over the Constitution. Just recently the provinces took the federal government to court over cutbacks in rail service.

Surely the federal government can show some leadership and iron out some of these problems in order that we can again have good will in this country. We should go to work realizing the potential that we have in this country. That is the sad part about this budget.

The Minister of National Revenue could not have looked at the budget papers. I use him as an example in order to try to make the point that we should be straightforward with each other and describe the situation as it is. Over the next five fiscal years, my province will lose \$219.4 million in transfer payments. That is on page 55 of the Fiscal Arrangements in the Eighties, part of the budget documents.

The Minister of National Revenue said that would not happen, that there would not be any reductions in transfer payments. Either he has not read the figures or he does not understand them. I find it inexcusable that a minister of the

Crown would get up and say that no province is going to lose. I will be happy to have the minister check the record tomorrow.

The minister mentioned that Newfoundland would gain. A minus to me means less. There are five columns, each with a minus. If you total them, it amounts to \$219 million over the next five years that Manitoba will lose in transfer payments. Surely there should be a better way to work out things rather than always arguing with each other. That is what makes me sad at having to get up and speak in this budget debate.

I would have liked to make some points in my speech saying that we are very happy with the budget, we can look forward to better times, we have some potential, we have more natural resources per capita than any country in the world, our resources are in demand around the world, we are fixing up our transportation system to take advantage of that, and our native people are happy because they do not feel they have been shortchanged in the bill of rights in the Constitution. However, we cannot say those things, and that makes me sad. This budget will make the whole country the poorer for it.

I hope that those who speak subsequently in this budget debate will take some of these matters into consideration and try to be constructive so that we can realize some of the potential this country has in order that everybody can partake in the wealth that Canadians have from coast to coast.

● (2120)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Tardif (Richmond-Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, in the course of this debate, I should like to express my views on the budget. Like the vast majority of Canadians, my constituents in the riding of Richmond-Wolfe which I represent in this House are also affected by inflation, unemployment and high interest rates. In my riding, which is semi-agricultural, the economy is highly dependent on agriculture, the asbestos, paper and footwear industries and, of course, on small and medium-sized businesses. In addition to the extremely difficult economic situation which has an impact on the daily lives of my constituents, there are two major problems facing two of the larger communities in my riding: the asbestos industry in Asbestos and the footwear industry in Richmond.

I must say a few words on these two subjects, but before elaborating any further, I should like to put before the House, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, some pertinent data on the subject. First of all, the asbestos market is going through a very difficult period. There are two reasons for the slowdown in this industry, one of which is that the construction industry is stagnating in most asbestos-importing countries. A direct consequence is a substantial drop in orders for producers. Furthermore, the asbestos market is suffering the damaging effects of the very poor reputation this natural resource has acquired. In this respect, the federal government has taken the excellent initiative of organizing a world conference for the purpose of clarifying this issue so that, hopefully, we will once again be able to use this mineral to its full extent, for the greater good of the industry, its workers and the Canadian