

Supply

He goes on to mention equalization payments. The statistics are almost alarming. We mentioned the net reduction in transfers to the provinces and again none of us on either side of this House want to see this happen, but it is a reality that we cannot ignore, but one of the startling figures that he brings out is that these transfer payments compose 39 per cent to 46 per cent of the provincial revenues in the respective provinces of Atlantic Canada.

What he is telling us, and most of us in this House know that anyway, but it is just to remind ourselves more than anything else, is that when you have an area of the country that depends on almost 50 per cent of their income from the rest of Canada, it tells you that there is a big, big problem.

I went through some of the structural changes that have to occur in Atlantic Canada and we have mentioned them, but this situation cannot continue. That is why I am really pleased with some of the initiatives that the federal government has taken to come to grips with this recurring problem, this problem that we have had since Confederation. For example, despite what we may think of it on an individual basis, the free trade agreement that will allow us to access that huge American market which is geographically next door, in my riding within six hours you can be within selling distance of 20 million to 50 million people. It is six to eight hours depending on what direction you are travelling. But there are all kinds of possibilities there for us.

We have got to get there on our own. We cannot continually look for other parts of Canada to prop up Atlantic Canada. We are going to need it. The difficulty that I see, of course, is getting from here to there. We know where we want to be and we are going to have to get some help to get there, but we are getting some of that help and I do not think we can ignore that.

Canadians have borne the burden well if you want to look at it in that sense; in other words, the have provinces to the have not provinces. It is a remarkable thing about this Confederation of ours that we have been able to do it. There are not too many Confederations in this world that will do it as well as we have in Canada. Can you imagine 50 cents out of every \$1 spent in

Atlantic Canada by the governments of Atlantic Canada are coming from the pockets of other Canadians and other provinces. That tells me that our Confederation has worked darn well for Atlantic Canada. We have obviously got to do more and we are going to do more because we are going to work through this problem together and we are not going to do it by simply criticising. I think the days of criticising are over.

It is very, very refreshing to note that when the loss, if you want put it that way, in those transfer payments to Atlantic Canada was announced, the premiers of Atlantic Canada did not jump up and down and pull their hair out by the roots and scream and holler and point fingers at Ottawa. It is very refreshing to note that they took a very balanced, reflective approach to the problem.

Two years ago that would not have happened. Two years ago they would not have done that. They would have been in front of the television cameras screaming and hollering at the reduction in transfer payments. That sense of reality is coming through. That sense of reality is best expressed by Premier Clyde Wells, and I quote from *The Montreal Gazette*, today's edition: "We have to bear in mind the whole nation has a problem". He is looking at a confederated Canada, a full Canada in which we work together on common problems.

It is very refreshing to note Mr. Wells' position in regard to our latest constitutional initiative. He knows that if this country is going to work, we have to work together to solve our problems. We do not do it by fighting.

He also goes on to say: "But we want to make sure that the reduction in federal transfers is done in such a way that it does not unfairly burden the poorer provinces like the Atlantic Provinces". I agree fully. As long as we all share part of the cost, we will do it ungrudgingly because we will all bear part of the burden for keeping this thing together, working together to get through our difficulties.

The premier of New Brunswick has basically stated the same thing. Mr. McKenna has stated that he is not happy with it. One of the things he is clearly unhappy with is the fact that the better you do in terms of dealing with some of the difficulties in your economy, the worse you are treated at the end of the day in relation to the