

Offshore we have the fishing fleets and offshore drilling and supply, all of which is work that should be carried on by vessels constructed in Canada. Beyond that there is the larger question of whether or not Canadians should begin again the development of a deepsea shipping fleet. Having those vessels built in Canada would mean more work for our shipyards.

Now, I do not think I need to make arguments this afternoon about the economic value of such a program as one contemplates the decline in Government revenues which has been experienced and the cost of such programs as unemployment insurance. We have to consider carefully the way in which employment has fallen off in shipbuilding over the past 10 years, so one can appreciate the economic necessity for these things. However, I do not think I need to make those arguments at any length in the very few moments that I have because the Progressive Conservative Party in years past has recognized that.

The 1979 program of the Party called for the gradual development of a Canadian deepsea fleet. It called for the development of tax policies to permit pre-tax dollars to be spent on vessel replacement and to make available low interest loans to Canadian shipbuilders. It called for the restriction of Canadian waters, after 1985, north of 60, to Canadian designed and constructed vessels for all extraction and shipment of Canada's Arctic resources. On several other points they clearly recognize the needs of the industry. In 1984, the Party program again called for a number of actions designed to create a prosperous industry.

The shocking and quite incredible fact is that on this day, one year after the Government was sworn in, with a fiscal and economic statement delivered and a Budget passed, there has not been any action. It is not surprising that a Government Member was compelled to say to his constituents that the impact of the federal Budget on the shipbuilding industry in Canada was disastrous, to say the least. It is not surprising that the President of the Canadian Shipbuilding and Ship Repair Association should say that the P.C. record in recent years as far as shipbuilding goes is perfidious. These are incredibly strong words, but the sad fact is that the Liberals during the 1980s ran the industry towards disaster. However, a year has passed and there has yet been no clear cut plan laid out and no evidence that this Conservative Government intends to change direction and move the industry towards the viability and prosperity that it promised the people of Canada last summer.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Monique Bernatchez-Tardif (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion):** Mr. Speaker, I would like in the first place to comment on the Hon. Member's contributions on the subject of a policy on changes in Canadian shipyards. To take up his question, yes, there is a study underway, as the Minister stated in the House last Spring, a study of the overall question, and as soon as there are discussions to be had with members in this House and announcements to be made, I am sure the Minister of Regional Indus-

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trial Expansion (Mr. Stevens) will be pleased to so advise the House.

However, I would like to comment on the example put forth by the Hon. Member to introduce his question, namely the Halifax shipyards.

● (1820)

[English]

I would like to remind him of what happened under this special project. On September 12, the Minister of Development for Nova Scotia announced that a group of prominent Halifax businessmen had purchased HIL. The consortium, led by a former President of St. John's Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Ltd. will take over management of HIL as of October 1985 and will become its owners as of January 1, 1986. The consortium will assume the provincial government's liability and invest an additional \$1 million in capital.

Through various industry assistance programs the federal Government has injected some \$49.6 million into the company since 1980. In addition, the contracts related to the three Coast Guard vessels currently being worked on at HIL have been renegotiated to permit the yard to complete this work. The three existing federal Government contracts will be completed at HIL, thereby providing continuing employment at approximately current levels for some months.

### AGRICULTURE—WESTERN DROUGHT—GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE. (B) REQUEST FOR DIRECT PAYMENTS TO FARMERS

**Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma):** Mr. Speaker, on September 10, I asked the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) when he was going to make financial assistance available to the farmers in western Canada who have lost so much through the drought this year. For the last couple of weeks we have been debating a billion dollar disaster caused by this Government in the Canadian Commercial Bank. However, Mr. Speaker, there is an even bigger disaster in western Canada, the drought which has affected millions of acres of land at an estimated cost of \$3 billion. In Saskatchewan alone over 30,000 farms were affected by this drought. Over 14 million acres of farmland have been devastated.

After prodding by the provincial government, the federal Government moved to provide assistance to the livestock industry, but it is still procrastinating on a decision with regard to the grain sector. The situation is desperate. There have been many meetings at which hundreds and hundreds of people have pleaded with the federal Government to take action. Fourteen hundred people attended a meeting in Bengough; 200 farm women attended another meeting there. At a meeting in Swift Current 500 people petitioned the Premier of Saskatchewan who was unwilling to meet the people who are facing this disaster. Other meetings were held in Ponteix, Kayville, and Climax where people called upon the Government for action. However, there is no action forthcoming.

This is a disaster of biblical proportions, Mr. Speaker, and the Government should be moving on it. Instead, we see