

over the past year and half than during the five previous years, and they were productive. Perhaps they arouse less interest generally because there are fewer brawls, but the results are there.

**Mr. Robichaud:** The Provinces have never lost that much.

**Mr. Blais:** The Provinces say they are satisfied, and there is no way they would like to go back to what they experienced during those 20 years of darkness, as you should remember. Besides, Mr. Speaker, consultations have also been held by Members of our party, and I had the privilege of chairing a committee of our party on farming matters that furthered those consultations with hundreds and thousands of farmers all through the year. We made recommendations to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Côté), and we are pleased to note that in last week's Budget, Mr. Speaker, concrete proposals were made by the Minister of Finance that very soon will have tangible results. The mortgage introduced by the Farm Credit Corporation, which is based on the price of farm commodities, will have a 6 per cent basic rate. This is what had been advocated by farm producers and by Members of this House, and this is what the Minister proposed in the Budget. This is a very progressive initiative which will allow 5,000 Canadian farmers to get back on their feet and to go on.

Without going into too much detail, these mortgages will be offered to farmers who, while having debt problems, also have satisfactory potential in the long term, which is what we need not only in agriculture, but in all sectors of the Canadian economy. There is also an initiative which was welcomed by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Côté), namely the creation of farm debt review panels. This was also requested urgently and unanimously by the provincial Ministers of Agriculture. These panels will make an in-depth and objective review of the financial position of farmers threatened by insolvency. We shall try to facilitate if possible agreements between the farmer and his creditors. We shall be able to provide advisory services to the farmers. These initiatives will allow us to save many Canadian farmers from bankruptcy and keep them in farming.

**Mr. Tardif:** Especially in the West.

**Mr. Blais:** Not only in the West, but everywhere in Canada. There is no doubt about it. This is how the previous Government tried to govern the country, by always creating divisions between the West and the East. That time is past. This will no longer take place. We have achieved reconciliation among Canadians. In spite of your attempts, we represent all Canadians, which is something that you were unable to do as a Government and as a political party for 20 years. As for us, we represent all Canadian provinces and we are going to represent them well. I am not worried. Not western Canada more than eastern Canada or central Canada. All parties are now repre-

### *The Budget—Mr. Blais*

sented at the table and can have their say. We are in a position to meet their expectations, something you were never able to do.

● (1720)

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Blais:** With respect to other measures, Mr. Speaker, through the Rural Transition Program we will try to implement measures to retrain farmers who are in trouble and cannot make a go of it. That is important as well. Often times we come across farm producers over 40, 50 and even 60 who need retraining to be able to earn a decent living.

Other measures have been announced in the Budget to retrain other middle-aged people, but I will not comment on them. These are all important measures which prove that we are concerned about the future of Canadian society. We simply do not accept your description of this Party as the Party of large corporations, of businessmen. That is not true. We are the Party of everybody and the Government of everybody, which is more than you could ever do. You have been sticking labels on our Party for years. That is over. You can rest assured that those labels will not stick.

We have maintained the fuel tax rebate of three cents a litre and it will be extended until January 1, 1988. This is another measure which will make it possible to save between \$100 and \$120 million, I believe. Another progressive measure, because we are fully aware that people find it difficult to pay their oil bills. Considering the oil mess in which the previous Government left us it is quite amazing that we were able to manage to come up with concrete measures to enable people to catch their breath. If they had fully assumed their responsibility when they had both the time and resources to do so, a few years ago, we would not be faced now with the need to reduce their deficits.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to deal with a last budgetary item in the agriculture area, namely, the Tobacco Growers Assistance Program. It is of course a delicate issue. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) has actively consulted tobacco growers and his provincial counterparts concerning a Tobacco Growers Assistance Program. The Standing Committee on Agriculture will continue to look into this over the next few weeks. Tobacco consumption in Canada has markedly decreased, mostly because Canadians are increasingly aware of the health hazards associated with it.

As the Government, Mr. Speaker, we are constantly faced with a major ethic and social problem. We are aware on the one hand of the health hazards of cigarette smoking and, on the other hand of the importance of the farming community involved in tobacco growing. This is a very difficult dilemma indeed.

The Minister of Agriculture will continue his consultations with the tobacco growers and, together, we will look for ways