

The Budget—Mr. N. Lapointe

When we worked out that agreement a few months ago, the province of Alberta offered from its share of the revenue to commit \$2 billion in unconditional funding over five years to improve substantially the capacity and efficiency of the rail transportation system in the west. The Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) said a little while ago that Alberta cannot do that. He would rather take that money and recycle it through the federal government because he thinks it has a better idea as to how it should be done.

Alberta's commitment also includes the commitments which were made to promote the substitution of natural gas and oil, to invest in the equity and debt in oil sands plants, to put in the infrastructures for those plants, which costs billions of dollars for each plant which is developed, to continue exploration and development and enhanced recovery and to provide equity and debt financing for the Quebec and maritime portions of the Q & M pipeline. This is over and above the loans to provinces, the amounts of money which are put into housing in Alberta and so forth through the Heritage Trust Fund.

I am running out of time. I think I have indicated for the record why the constituents of my riding feel so frustrated about what has gone on here in the past two weeks. Now they must face the uncertainty of this budget. At the weekends, truck drivers telephone me about losing their jobs and about not looking forward to making their payments this winter. This is because of the downslide of the oil industry. When we cut off half the budget, even if it is that of a multinational company, it takes years to recover. No grants scheme can move those small companies which have been farming out to international companies up to major developments in drilling within a matter of months. It is impossible. So the jobs go out the window this winter, and people will suffer. Surely if the government is going to put in this program, even though I disagree with it, an orderly plan could have been developed so that people would not have to suffer as they will under this plan.

The only thing I found in this budget with which I could agree is that antique cars, of which I happen to be a buff, will be allowed in free.

● (1750)

[Translation]

Mr. Normand Lapointe (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to take part in the budget debate in the House of Commons. I would like to begin by saying, if I may, how grateful I am to all those who helped me to become the new member of Parliament for Beauce.

I also wish to thank sincerely and pay homage to all my colleagues who have been of great assistance to me in learning the ropes of parliamentary work. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I am determined to continue to learn so that I may give full satisfaction to those who were willing to have confidence in me.

I was very proud to arrive in the House of Commons last February as I had the honour to represent Beauce at a difficult time for our economy.

I would not want to begin my speech, Mr. Speaker, without saying a few words about a constituency which, only 30 years ago, was nearly exclusively agricultural and which has now become a very important economic development sector in Quebec.

The monthly financial and economic periodical *Finance* devoted several pages to this area in its edition of August 18. In an article entitled "Beauce: A very human miracle", it said the following: "In the last few years, Beauce has become the favorite of the Quebec economic world." Indeed, the Japan of Quebec now has over 400 small and medium businesses and a new business is established nearly every week.

The people of Beauce have set themselves to the task and have been able to develop a centre with many economic activities of which they are very proud.

The unemployment rate is lower than in other areas of Quebec, as it was about 8.8 per cent in 1979 while the rate for Quebec as a whole increased from 8.1 per cent to 9.5 per cent during the same period. However, I can assure you that this did not come easily.

We succeeded, I think, in keeping an undaunted spirit of solidarity, and unmatched spirit of enterprise and a remarkable sense of entrepreneurship. I was born in Beauce county where I still live at the present time. There I have seen spring up several prosperous businesses typical of our area. Just to give you an example of the business acumen of the Beauce people, ever since its establishment in 1969 until August 30 of this year, the Department of Regional Economic Expansion studied 199 files. It allocated \$19 million in direct grants. To appreciate the over-all picture of the investments during that time, \$81 million in private investments must be added to that figure. In other words, by itself the DREE contribution amounted to 23.37 per cent of the investments in question. This resulted in about 3900 new jobs. The Beauce area enjoyed a significant economic development as well a net increase in the standard of living of its people during the past few years because of the takeover by the Beauce businessmen, farmers and workers. All the economic factors regarding available income, retail sales, industrial production and employment went up considerably in relation to the national average. Surely, these advances were the result of the effort of those directly involved in the Beauce economic process. However, the concerns about the high rates of inflation, interest and unemployment, do remain. People are still concerned.

In view of the over-all situation of the Canadian economy, I should like now, Mr. Speaker, to direct my remarks to the various components of the budget introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) a budget that we were all waiting for, especially the press which had predicted doom and