

My question to the Leader of the Government in the Senate is this: Was the impact of the budget measures on the diverse regions of the country taken fully into account in the consultations and deliberations which preceded the decision to go ahead with the measures proposed in the budget, or is the leader reluctant to deal with that question on the grounds that those consultations were of a secret nature?

● (1430)

**Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I am not reluctant to deal with the question, but I have some trouble providing a satisfactory answer, because the discussions which immediately preceded the budget took place within a limited group in the government. I was not a member of that group, so I will have to take the question as notice and see whether the Minister of Finance can provide an answer for my friend.

**Senator Stewart:** Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question. I wonder whether any "impact study"—that seems to be an "in" expression these days—has been made to ascertain what the result would be for the various regions. I assume that, if such an impact study has been made, the Leader of the Government in the Senate will inform us about it.

My next question, honourable senators, relates to the meeting of the premiers of the maritime provinces at Roseneath, Prince Edward Island. At the conclusion of that meeting, the three Atlantic premiers expressed dissatisfaction with measures in the budget. The Premier of New Brunswick, Mr. Hatfield, said:

The people who come from the more populated parts of the country, and have more votes in Parliament, were listened to more than the people who come from an area like the Maritimes.

He went on to say:

But it's important to understand there is an opportunity to make another case. These things aren't final and they aren't definite.

The Premier of Nova Scotia, the Honourable John Buchanan, said that he had every hope that, in discussions with his federal colleagues in Ottawa, they would be able to achieve success in changing certain budget measures.

Will the Leader of the Government in the Senate bring these representations from the maritime premiers to the attention of his colleagues? Can he give us any assurance that the Premier of Nova Scotia is correct when he says that he has grounds for hope that they will be able to achieve success in having some of these budget measures dropped or modified?

**Senator Roblin:** I think that I can tell my honourable friend that the record of the present administration in dealing with the provinces is a successful one. We have been able to secure agreement on a wide number of economic questions having to do with regional economic development. We have been able to settle matters in connection with the national energy policy of the country. Generally speaking, there has been a cordial

atmosphere for negotiations between the two levels of government.

When a new budget is introduced—particularly one that has to deal with the economic questions facing this country—it is only reasonable to expect that there will be a lot of people who feel themselves squeezed. We will no doubt hear more about that in the debates that will take place in this chamber before long. I find it understandable that the premiers of those provinces would be presenting their points of view. I think their principal concern has to do with transfer payments and the policy of the government in that respect.

I know that the government has stated that it will be providing the same percentage of revenue for this purpose as it has done in the past, so we know that those payments will continue to increase in the future. We also know that next year the agreements between the provinces and the federal government respecting transfer payments will be up for renegotiation. My guess, then, would be that the premiers of these provinces—who do not communicate with me and whose views I read in the newspapers, as my honourable friend has done—are probably thinking to themselves that, at the time of those negotiations on federal-provincial fiscal transfers, they will be able to make a good case for their provinces. I suspect that agreement will be reached.

**Senator Stewart:** Honourable senators, according to the Canadian Press account, the premiers came out of the meeting united in their opposition to the partial de-indexing of old age pensions as well as being concerned about the possibility of a reduction in transfer payments. I assume that this is one of the issues on which the Premier of Nova Scotia is hoping that changes can be secured. Is there any ground for that hope?

**Senator Roblin:** I have no licence to interpret the views of the premiers of the various provinces, and I do not intend to do so. If my honourable friend wishes to debate this proposition—as he obviously wishes to do—he can put forward his views in the course of the next few days, and I will listen to him with a great deal of interest and attention.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY—PROPOSED EXPORT OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS TO CANADA

**Hon. Raymond J. Perrault:** Honourable senators, a few moments ago, the Leader of the Government made reference to the increasingly difficult and competitive international trade situation respecting the agriculture industry. I tend to agree with his remarks.

A few weeks ago at Geneva, together with other parliamentarians I met with leaders of the European Economic Community. If there ever was a group intent on playing hardball in the world agricultural markets, it has to be the EEC. Its leaders complained about their vast surpluses in certain commodities, including wine. They said that their wine products are not extended sufficiently free entry into Canada. They suggested, in effect, that they had enough wine to fill all of the world's swimming pools or to float all of the world's warships and