

Canada Assistance Plan

negotiations with that company to have those jobs reinstated during a time when the picture might have been much more bleak than it currently is. I think these successful negotiations are to the detriment of the federal Government because it did not take its responsibility seriously.

We have also seen the Government of New Brunswick take the responsibility upon itself to ensure that the plywood mill in the Newcastle region was able to keep its doors open for another few weeks or months so that the workers in the industry in that region—at a time when Christmas is just around the corner—would have the opportunity to put at least a few dollars aside so their families may have a somewhat more pleasant Christmas than might have otherwise been the case.

Last year we were treated to the spectacle of the Government proposing to decrease equalization payments to the Provinces over a period of three or five years. Eastern Canada was to receive approximately \$5 billion less in equalization payments. Obviously, this will make it much more difficult for Provinces like New Brunswick since it will adversely affect its health care program, increase the financial burden on the shoulders of the taxpayers in the Provinces, particularly the poorer provinces such as New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Quebec. It will affect the educational programs which we are so rightly proud of in New Brunswick. It will mean less funding to the universities and as a result will cost the students more money if, indeed, they are able to obtain the money to continue their education. I dare say that some students will now be denied the opportunity to acquire an education because the Government has determined that it will decrease equalization payments substantially in the next few years to those provinces which so desperately require the additional assistance.

We have seen various programs introduced. We have seen the new Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) tell the nation and the House of Commons yesterday that a job creation program will be set in place that will create untold numbers of jobs. This will be done with \$1.2 billion which will be saved and gathered from other Departments which would have spent the money in other areas. We were told that there will in fact be a tax increase which will be paid by the employers and the workers of this nation which will amount to something in the vicinity of \$3 billion plus.

There are more logical, reasonable and responsible ways that this Government could carry out its responsibilities. Let me give one or two examples of how this could be accomplished particularly in New Brunswick, since the Hon. Member's motion deals with that Province. In recent days the Minister responsible for the Wheat Board has been asked by a committee of concerned workers in the Port of Saint John to arrange for a few additional shipments of wheat and flour through the Port of Saint John during the off season. This is not something that the Minister has not heard before because I raised this matter in the House last May. I know that the Minister has been contacted previously by various officials of the Port Development Authority, the City of Saint John, other unions and officials from the city as well. All they were asking

was that a few additional shipments of wheat and flour be shipped through the port facilities, which are fine facilities that have been developed over a number of years. The port has a good reputation and its workers are hard working and industrious people who have a good work history. They were only asking that a few additional shipments of wheat be sent through during the slack season so that the port may be utilized on a year-round basis. This would assist the workers in that area substantially. It is not an unrealistic request. Indeed, it is very acceptable. It is certainly within the Government's purview to arrange it.

For some reason the Government has determined that it will not treat the Port of Saint John as it treats other ports in eastern Canada. The Minister informed me that this would be inconsistent with present policy. It would not be in the best interests of the wheat and flour suppliers of the country. I question that reason because it is a fact that it is apparently acceptable for other ports in eastern Canada. If it is good for other ports, why can it not be done in the Port of Saint John?

I suspect that rather than a problem of economics it is a political problem. I believe if one were to examine the shipments going to the other ports it would be determined that with a proper attitude in the Government benches shipments of wheat and flour could indeed be diverted to some extent to the Port of Saint John during the off season instead of only during the winter months when that port, along with other ports in eastern Canada, are already busy. Of course, the Port of Montreal is an exception since it is frozen during winter. But no, we are told that that cannot happen.

● (1730)

The workers of that port city are not taking that as an answer. The workers have banded together and have formed a committee called the Port of St. John Committee of Concern. Indeed, they have a great deal to be concerned about when they see the utter rejection and lack of response from the Government with regard to their plight. In the City of St. John we have a shipbuilding industry which works out of a shipyard which is an excellent facility. If the Government were to take an attitude that is a little more objective toward the re-establishment of a merchant marine in this country, that shipbuilding facility in St. John and the shipbuilding facilities in Quebec and Halifax would find that currently they are providing very few jobs in comparison with those which would be created as a spin-off of a positive attitude toward the re-establishment of a merchant marine in Canada.

Daily I receive letters and petitions from workers facing lay-offs in the shipbuilding industry in my region and others throughout New Brunswick. Those who have been laid off or who are facing lay-offs are saying, "Where do we turn? For whom do we look?"

The Canada Development Community Projects will certainly not assist to any degree those people who have skills in the shipbuilding industry. However, their needs must be addressed. The Government should take a positive attitude, one which