

The Budget—Mr. R. Guay

abled the ones we have to build over thirty ships for foreign owners, while gaining valuable experience in the construction of heavy tonnage units and developing new building methods.

I think that the government would be well advised to keep this program and enlarge its scope so that it may be applied to shipowners who could benefit from it either by increasing or streamlining their present fleet. I do hope that the departments concerned will take the necessary measures to assure the survival and the maintenance of that fleet. This program is to expire on March 31, 1975.

Always with regard to shipyards, my riding at Lévis has one very well known all over our country if not all over the world. In the past few years, at least four departments have been preparing a study for a report on the feasibility of building a giant dry dock in the Lauzon shipyards. I am eager to know when that report will be tabled. As far as coastal traffic is concerned, I note with utmost satisfaction that several of the points I made in my budget speech last year did materialize.

At that time I also drew attention to the pension fund for CN workers. Some commendable improvements were brought to the pension plan for retired CN employees, but I think the basic problem has not yet been solved, namely pension rates for retiring employees. CN employees are now wondering why, as employees of a Crown corporation, they are not being treated exactly like employees from other corporations under federal jurisdiction.

I believe their demand is reasonable, and I think their pensions should be geared to the cost of living.

Another problem inherent in inflation is that of agriculture, and especially farmers. I have no need to emphasize the very serious situation of egg, grain, and beef producers, and even sugar producers now, since all that is being accurately reported on by mass media.

The government also admits to that emergency situation. Therefore, I would like to see measures developed rapidly to prevent those disasters which we will necessarily head for if we do not take immediate action. The government should act more quickly in respect of food products and especially sugar.

What is the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) waiting for to make a statement on those measures and programs for helping farmers produce more sugar beet? Besides, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gillespie) should enter as soon as possible into international agreements with sugar producing countries and of course try to get the fairest, that is the cheapest prices.

Incidentally, I would like to make a few comments on the Plumptre Board. The Plumptre Board has no powers but an informative role, or at least that of a watchdog, if one looks at what happened last month in the Ottawa area. We know that the Plumptre Board made a survey during over five weeks going from store to store, checking prices, publishing price differentials. Fortunately, because the Plumptre Board was there, last month's statistics prove that only the Ottawa area did not register higher food prices. For that reason I welcome the work of the Plumptre Board.

As I said in my opening remarks I will not praise indefinitely the Plumptre Board because I know it has no

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power but at least until we take further steps it continues to play the role of watchdog it plays so well at present.

Another suggestion comes from the farmers themselves. Recently Quebec farmers at a convention asked the federal government to intervene directly into the beef problem. It replied that the matter came under provincial rather than federal jurisdiction. I confess this is true but it is also true that we were elected to this House by the people of this country and it is our duty to help them when they ask us to do so.

When he next meets with his provincial counterparts, will the Minister of Agriculture consider setting up an agreement scheme providing for special intervention by the federal government when the people of this country ask for it and when situations such as those we faced and we now face call for it? Mr. Speaker, the people of this country need to be reassured, and I sincerely hope that this Parliament will take the necessary steps to ensure more stability in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, this is my first speech since the election of July last, and I want to thank the voters of the riding of Lévis who elected me for a fifth consecutive time and put their confidence in me so I would vindicate first their interests and contribute with my colleagues to passing legislation guaranteeing them more justice and a happier life. I want to assure them that I will do everything in my power not to betray their confidence.

[English]

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, for those of us who sit on this side of the House it is always a challenge to participate in a budget debate because in my view Liberal budgets are almost always deceptively misleading at first glance. This budget is certainly no exception. Not only is it deceptive but it is, in my judgment, misleading. Moreover, it is based on highly questionable assumptions with respect to the predicted rate of growth of the economy and the export outlook of our durable goods. But most significant of all is that at a time when Canadians on low and fixed incomes are not making ends meet, and when Canadians in the middle-income bracket are bearing an increasingly burdensome share of taxation, there will be neither relief from inflation nor any meaningful relief from taxation.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, this budget is one of the most regressive budgets we have seen in the past six years. It harks back to the days before the Carter commission on taxation. It is a piece of classical nineteenth century Liberalism. It is a budget for the wealthy, for the big corporations, for the foreigners who own and control our resource industries. It is a budget for the big investors. This is not a budget for the hundreds of thousands of ordinary Canadians, many of whom supported the Liberals last July hoping that the Liberal Party would finally come to grips with the spiralling cost of living, high unemployment and the growing disillusionment in general with respect to politics, politicians and governments.

When fully appreciated by the Canadian people, this budget will serve only to heighten their suspicions that government in Ottawa today is no longer responsive to their basic needs; that it no longer cares about decent housing at reasonable prices; that it no longer cares if