

which left it virtually at the mercy of the free market forces. That is where we are now. We now have provincial Governments, large oil companies, small oil companies and exploration companies crying out saying: "Let us do away with this notion of the free market. We want help, intervention and support".

We as New Democrats have been consistent. We have said that we support the establishment of a floor price to be paid to producers for their first 500 barrels of production, a policy which would primarily benefit, not the large multinational integrated oil companies, but the independent Canadian-owned sector and result in only very modest price increases. This particular pro-active move would give a strong support base and send a very clear signal that the Government of Canada is interested in supporting the small producer and the small exploration companies in this critical sector.

We have seen an interesting government initiative in the Province of Manitoba. I refer to the CF-18 maintenance contract not being delivered to that province, with a small token going to the Edmonton area. I emphasize that it is but a token. We do not want to get too caught up in enthusiasm simply because we in western Canada were tossed out a bone.

Last week we heard about the close-down of a packing plant in Winnipeg with a resulting loss of 475 jobs. This company was given a federal government grant recently to assist in the opening of a hog-slaughtering plant which will employ 110 workers in total. So we see a net loss then in that industry of 365 jobs. On the one hand the Government is creating competition here and on the other it is closing down plants there. We saw the same thing in western Canada with the federal Government providing all types of assistance and tens of millions of dollars to develop the northeast coal fields in British Columbia. It did so only to find out later that the mine had been developed in the wrong place. Nevertheless, after a great deal of infrastructure was put in place and tens of millions of dollars were allocated, what the Government did was to put the northeast coal fields of British Columbia in direct competition with the southeast coal fields of British Columbia and the southwestern coal fields of Alberta. I believe the Government now has virtually a moral obligation because of its actions in terms of northeastern British Columbia to do whatever it can to help the industry in southeastern British Columbia and southwestern Alberta get back on its feet. The movement of coal to central Canada on an expanded basis would be one way to show its good intentions in that respect.

I wish to close my comments by saying that when we look at the economy in western Canada today we see a very serious economic tragedy occurring in the Province of Alberta. Just the other day the Alberta Government announced its solution to the whole problem. Its solution as announced on November 17 is to bring about drastic cuts in provincial government expenditures. It is asking various Departments to cut back by 25 per cent in terms of expenditures. Again, that is the typical Conservative response to difficult times. I have never seen a business or a farmer yet who was able to expand into new

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productive areas by cutting back on investment. What the Government must do in western Canada is to start investing in western Canada. It must consider the introduction of agribonds and parity pricing to help the hard-pressed agricultural sector. It must provide more assistance to the forest sector in terms of silviculture and reforestation projects. It must provide more support to the municipalities to allow the large and small ones in western Canada to get on with the development of urban infrastructures by putting large numbers of Canadians back to work. It must get on in terms of the Polar 8 ice-breaker contract. It must consider ways and means of putting money into the hands of small businesses, primarily through improvements in federal government procurement programs.

When we look at federal government procurement programs we see that in terms of goods and services the federal Government's needs are filled almost exclusively by central Canada. While there have been marginal improvements in the last two years, a great deal more is needed. Premier Vander Zalm of British Columbia has been crying out, as have British Columbians for many, many years, that now is the time for the federal Government to show its support by sourcing more goods and supplies from western Canadian producers and suppliers.

● (1800)

There are many things the federal Government can do. There are many programs that could be implemented and steps that could be taken. Considering the very difficult times that are being experienced by the four western provinces and the northern Territories, the Government ought to turn its full attention to that part of Canada. It simply ought to treat western Canada with the same kind of commitment and enthusiasm with which it has treated other regions. All we ask is for fair treatment, nothing more but certainly nothing less.

Premier Getty of Alberta, Premier Vander Zalm of British Columbia, the whole list of Socred candidates who were running for leadership and Premier Pawley of Manitoba all have the same theme. It is time the Government listened to them. They are saying that they feel betrayed and let down. They are saying that the federal Government has turned its back on them.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérin:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead (Mr. Gérin), on a point of order.

**Mr. Gérin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the Hon. Member's speaking time expired a while ago, and he is now trying to take up extra time so we won't have a chance to comment and correct a number of erroneous statements he made since he started his speech.