

The Budget—Mr. McCain

● (2050)

An hon. member said in the House that I was a provincial member. I deny that categorically. I am a Canadian. I want to see a mechanism for the adjustment of the wealth in Canada so it can be harmoniously distributed, instead of the conflicts we will have if this budget is passed.

During the course of the debate one can be tempted to be deflected from those issues most important to one's constituents. Most of my constituents are interested in the forestry industry, something which I have already discussed. There is nothing but discouragement for those in the forest industry because there has been no indication from the Government of Canada, which receives close to \$2 billion in revenue from the forest industry, that it will provide any more money for research or reforestation or any project other than education from which the government will enhance its political profile. This is clearly indicated in the budget document.

Canada's fishermen have been given a false anticipation of what their earning capabilities might be, whether they are processors or active fishermen or workers in the fish plants. They have been encouraged to believe that their incomes would far exceed their expectations. The Government of Canada has a policy which puts no emphasis on the quality of the product. It has refused to help the fisherman upgrade his boat so he could deliver better quality produce. It has refused to put grading standards on fish to encourage better quality. As a result, we have lost markets which should not have been lost. These markets should have grown in the last five years, but now they are gone.

The government has failed to realize that old boats need to be replaced, that young fishermen need a chance to get into the fishing industry. Instead, the government has made regulations which deny the young fisherman, who has to buy a boat to get a licence, the opportunity to do so. Because of the regulations, a young fisherman may find himself with a licence but with a boat that is not safe to sail. Since he has not operated that boat for two years, he cannot get a safe boat to use with his licence. If he does not sail the boat, even in jeopardy of his life, he loses the licence because he has not used the boat to fish for two years and the licence has not been used. That is how the regulation works. I know of about six young fishermen in my constituency who are sailing death traps because of idiotic regulations placed on replacement of boats by our Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. LeBlanc). This is with the blessing of members from Atlantic Canada who should know better.

I wish I could tell a happy story, and I believe it could be much happier if we could get an improved boat replacement program, a proper marketing thrust and leadership instead of misguidance from this government and its Minister of Fisheries and the people in that ministry.

I would like to turn now to the farming structure. The problems in the food processing industry and the fish processing industry are the same. My constituency probably contains the highest level of food processing of any other constituency

in Canada. For this reason I am concerned about the health of the food processing industry for both fish and farm produce.

There have been some very hard times in the agricultural industry, and if the member for Chicoutimi (Mr. Dionne) were here he could confirm what I am saying. The inflationary process in the field of potato agriculture is such that since 1971, had I grown an acre of potatoes, planted in May of one year and delivered in April or May of the next year, the interest costs on that acre of potatoes in 1981 would exceed the total cost of the acre of potatoes ten years earlier. That is the impact inflation has had.

Here is a government which is prepared to put up to \$300 million into Chrysler—I do not quarrel with that because we need the industry—but is proposing to put only \$50 million into a depressed agricultural industry for all of Canada. The government is going to help up to 10,000 people in Ontario and it is going to throw the farmers of Canada to the wolves with \$50 million. Relatively speaking, Mr. Speaker, the government should not even go to church with that little cheque for the collection plate when you look at its relative value to the tens of thousands of Canadian farmers, some of whom are destitute.

Furthermore, \$5 million of that \$50 million will be used to pay interest on what would have been helpful to the farmers in the first place. Therefore, the farmers only get \$45 million.

I believe I can say to you, Mr. Speaker, without any challenge, that there are enough farmers in an emergency position in Atlantic Canada that the \$45 million would not go halfway around. What does that do for the beef feeders or the pork producers in the rest of Canada? It does nothing. The government says to let Atlantic Canada have it and let the rest of Canada sit around and wait, just to see.

The minister has expressed his problem of the day that he has to consult all his regional directors to determine how he will spread this \$45 million among the tens of thousands of farmers who need it. It is of no use for anyone on that side of the House to complain about food costs if they are to let agriculture suffer the fate that has been extended to it by a minister who stays in office while the agricultural industry is abused in its time of need.

Last weekend I was talking to a widow who lives on a fixed income. She expressed how proud she and her husband had been that they had been able to save money and did not have to go on welfare. She was using virtually all of her income to exist in the state of care which she needs, and that proud lady told me that because of this new tax structure her fixed income will not be adequate. She will have to seek help from the public purse. That is the impact, which has been brought about by the change in the income tax structure, on those who live on fixed incomes. My God, Mr. Speaker, has this government no conscience? Did members opposite think, as they approved this budget—if they ever heard of it in their caucus—of what they were doing to the people on fixed incomes, who were relying on interest or dividends to have a decent standard of living? Did they think about the old couples who are paying the full impact of the tax on gas, oil and fuel or the