Borrowing Authority

Why are we doing it? It is because historically, going back to 1972, 1973, and 1974, we moved from surplus to deficit by raising expenditures and not raising revenue.

The Budget before us gives the detailed knowledge of our borrowing requirements. We would have a surplus; we are bringing in more money on the revenue side than we are spending in programs, but we have to pay the interest on the public debt. A lot more money goes into interest on the public debt than is available for regional sharing or regional development.

I wonder whether the Hon. Member opposite who just spoke would acknowledge that the employment situation is better in his region than it was on the day his Party lost office and the new Party came into power. If that is true, then what is it that we have been doing that is working right? Perhaps he could just mention that.

Let me come specifically to his responsibility as energy critic. He was part of a Government—and I watched him—which devastated my region, causing suicides, murders, crimes, child beatings—the whole bit—because of the National Energy Program. It threw people out of work. We moved from 4 per cent unemployment to over 12 per cent. He supported that policy. At the same time employment creation funds or regional disparity funds were not given to Alberta, not to the unemployed people in Alberta. They were taken down to his province, to Allan MacEachen's riding, some $586 per unemployed person, whereas it was some $12 per unemployed person in my riding. That view of regional disparity is real and tangible. If one happened to be an unemployed person in Calgary or elsewhere in Alberta, one did not feel very good about it, especially when the Government did that which caused massive unemployment.

I wonder, talking about regional disparity, what would be his solution to the reality that a Crown corporation called Petro-Canada has a large land position. It is possible to develop a resource faster than it is being developed. What would he do? Would he borrow more money to give to the Crown corporation, or does he advocate allowing Canadians as individuals to participate in the provision of money to develop the resource, the jobs, and the economy? Which side of the picket fence does he come down on? Does he want us to borrow more? Does he want us not to do the activity, or is he prepared to acknowledge that it might be a good idea to go with the private sector and allow individual Canadians to participate in the development of their own resource?

Mr. MacLellan: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) has an awful nerve to raise the relationship of my constituency now as opposed to what it was when the Government took over. When the Government took over, the unemployment rate in Cape Breton—The Sydneys was 16 per cent. Today it is 21.1 per cent.

The Government has stated that it wants to help economically deprived areas. Let me tell the House what the Government did after the September 24, 1984 federal election. There was a decentralized office for income security already being built and planned for Sydney. People were being trained. The Government stopped the project and cancelled training. Some of the people had already left other jobs. Of course many of them did not have jobs with that kind of unemployment rate. It cancelled the training.

That income security office was one of four decentralization projects. The other three were in Chatham, Peterborough, and Timmins. The other three went ahead because they elected Tory MPs. The one in Cape Breton—The Sydneys did not.

Do you know, Madam Speaker, what those people who did not have jobs had to do? The only alternative was for some of them to go to Timmins, Peterborough or Chatham to work in the income security offices which went ahead. That was one project.

There was a second project where a new federal building was being built. The architect had already drawn the plans. The land had been bought. The tenders had been called and were all in, ready to be opened. The Government cancelled the whole project. They lost $2.1 million on wasted moneys in the income security office and over $3 million in the cancelled federal building.

The third project was fixing up the main street and harbour development in Sydney. The cost of it was supposed to be shared between the federal and provincial Governments. This Government bailed out at the last minute. There was also a plan for a new wash-house at the Prince mine which the Government cancelled. The Government told the people of Cape Breton that if it closed the heavy water plants, it would ensure that alternative employment was in place. The Minister for International Trade (Miss Carney) said that, and within a few months the heavy water plants were closed without any regard for alternative employment, and the Government has the unmitigated nerve to talk about sympathy and concern for regions with economic difficulties. It does not know what is concern or sympathy.

Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate on Bill C-109 to extend borrowing authority to the Government.

Last week I had the opportunity to speak in the budget debate, and I should like to build on the observations I made on Tuesday last in exploring the authority which the Government seeks today and in considering what would be better principles of financing the Government of Canada and providing for the prosperity of Canadians in the Budget.

I put it in that context because I looked at the comments offered by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Vincent) on February 12 when he brought in the Bill for second reading. He said something about the borrowing authority passed last year for the current year as part of his explanation of the authority the Government is seeking this year. As I looked at the figures, I found myself really quite struck by evidence of how the Government failed and how the plans of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) for deficit reduction, for sound budgeting as he sees it, have really stalled.