

Supply

days of the Liberals and it is only going to be \$6 million a year, if we ever get it renewed at all.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The period for questions and comments has now ended. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Selkirk.

Mr. David Bjornson (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I take a bit of pride in being able to speak here this afternoon on the motion. Before I get too far into the motion I would like to say that I truly understand the importance of regional economic development. As a businessman who started out in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, I personally felt the effects of what the previous Liberal government was doing with its centralized economic policies. It caused significant problems for us in western Canada.

We talked about interest rates on supply products. As a businessmen trying to finance various projects at extremely high finance rates, I found at times that I was on working and working and working and at the end of the year the finance costs basically took over all the efforts and any profit margin that my small or medium sized business was able to attain.

One of the other problems that I had at that time was supply material. Because of the centralized policy that the government had at that time there was a reasonably booming economy down in southern Ontario. When you come from a small region such as I did in Manitoba, the suppliers and manufacturers, although they did not really take a dim view of what we were doing in my region or the other regions of western Canada, they took a look at market shares. They decided that it was unimportant to make sure that the small business or the small wholesaler in regions outside central Canada had goods in place so that they could carry on their projects. That is one of the major reasons why the past government was defeated. Those of us in areas outside central Canada took a complete dislike to what was going on. It is important to give that background before I get into what I have to say because I think the record of our government since 1984 speaks for itself.

In the last little while we have taken on economic renewal, not only in western Canada but all throughout Canada. We have put a lot of thrust into small business. We have taken a look at small business and we know how important it is to each individual small community. Small business is one of the greatest creators of employment.

We have done our job to reduce the deficit. We have reduced the size and role of government in all aspects, not necessarily just business. We have gone through regulatory reforms and we have gone into privatization. We have privatized a number of things.

One thing to remember is that we have delivered on all the things we said we would do, not only in 1984, but also when we resumed after the past election.

We can talk about how we have turned the deficit around. When we came into power in 1984 there was a program spending deficit of approximately \$16 billion. For this present year, we are going to have a \$9 billion surplus in program spending. The net result is that we have turned that program spending around by \$25 billion. That is quite significant. That is an awful lot of money.

We have reduced the public service. We have taken the attitude that government does not have to be everywhere. We listened to the people of the country and decided it was important to reduce the size of the federal civil service, and we have done that by approximately 12,000 people. Right now we are back down to the 1973 level. It is quite surprising that we can do all this work with fewer people. What we have, for lack of a better word, is a lean, mean machine here.

Mr. Mills: Check your contracts.

Mr. Bjornson: Well that could be, but we get the job done and we have reduced program spending. Even if it is out there in contracts, we are spending less money doing it. That is a good thing to remember.

Mr. Nault: At double the price.

Mr. Bjornson: If I could get a job at double the price I would probably be out there right now, but I do not think that can happen.

We have sold 16 Crown corporations. We have done it. We have turned it around. We got rid of Air Canada. Air Canada is out there operating on its own, and who is the biggest shareholder in Air Canada right now? It is its own employees. We have turned this around and the government is doing quite well.

Let us talk about what has happened in agriculture. The farming community in western Canada needed help and we provided it. Last year in western Canada, on an