

Government grants tend to be in larger communities. Larger communities have economic opportunities which the smaller ones do not have. Unfortunately there is tremendous resistance. The Public Service establishes a set of priorities based upon blanket population and upon arbitrary allocation of resources. It is tremendously difficult to change those arbitrary plans and those arbitrary allocations so that the dollars are spent in communities where the need is greatest.

I am very pleased that the Hon. Member asked me his questions. I hope some of my answers might be taken as suggestions for improving job-creation programs.

Mr. Kristiansen: Mr. Speaker, I have a further question which concerns the new job-creation programs mentioned in the last Speech from the Throne. In my constituency of Kootenay West we have now been frustrated on three occasions by a provincial ministry, the parks branch of the Conservative Government of British Columbia. It has blocked three different Environment 2000 projects in that community alone. The branch has given as an excuse, although informally, "union problems". The unions concerned are unaware of such "problems". In fact, that provincial Conservative Government is using prisoners to do some of the work in those parks. This is why it does not want Environment 2000 involved. I wonder how widespread that experience is. We have one from the Nakusp Legion, another from the Kootenay Mountaineering Club and another from further down on the Arrow Lakes. We are facing that kind of problem throughout British Columbia.

Has the Hon. Member faced those situations in his riding? If so, what action would he suggest in order to try to turn them around and ensure that the provincial Conservative Government is not frustrating the few things which the Government opposite does?

Mr. Fisher: We are neck deep in good things.

Mr. Skelly: Mr. Speaker, the only thing in which the Hon. Member will be neck deep at the next federal election is a rope. That brings great joy to my heart. The question raised by my colleague is certainly a very valid one. Unfortunately, the people of British Columbia, more than those in any other Canadian province, are being deprived of federal funding or their share of the return of tax dollars for programs by one of the most vicious, anti-people governments which has been seen in this country to date.

I wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Mulroney) at some point might want to retract his statement that the provincial Government in British Columbia might be doing some things wrong. He is on the right track. It has probably deprived British Columbians of more in a shorter period of time than any other government in Canada.

Mr. Ralph Ferguson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to rise today to participate in the debate on the Budget of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde). This Budget is really a program of action designed to lead Canada from recovery to expansion. I believe it is a very timely Budget in that it shows

The Budget—Mr. Ferguson

business and the various economic sectors in Canada the direction in which we are heading in terms of our economy and our economic plan so that businessmen can plan ahead with confidence and the knowledge that the programs are in place and that they can build upon these programs in the years ahead as they make long-term investments.

● (1710)

I am alarmed that during this Budget debate various Members of the Official Opposition have been making comments that are somewhat difficult to substantiate. They have made comments about the National Energy Program. One referred to it as an odorous program. They have failed to follow what has been happening with the National Energy Program. I pointed out in a question yesterday that over 4,000 oil wells had been drilled and completed in Canada in 1983. I am talking about oil wells, not gas wells. One province alone has over 11,000 gas wells that are capped because of lack of markets. Why would any driller want to drill more gas wells when there is such a surplus? I repeat, over 4,000 oil wells were drilled and completed in Canada in 1983. Compare that with the previous best year, 1980, when 2,600 were drilled and completed in Canada. There was an increase of 53 per cent. Something must be working, or we would not have had that increase. I further point out that in 1984 the number of wells drilled and completed as of February 4, 1984 was 11 per cent over 1983. The number of rigs drilling is up dramatically. Something must be working in the National Energy Program with the expansion that is taking place. It is irresponsible to cast such a cloud of doom and gloom over the energy industry in Canada when there has been a dramatic turnaround. The small oil companies and the companies providing allied services are contributing to our economic recovery.

I want to comment on some other matters mentioned this morning by Members of the Official Opposition. They complained about the lack of assistance in the Budget for farmers wishing to export, in this case the export of tobacco. It is mystifying, to say the least, how members of the Official Opposition can make such a complaint when it is they who opposed the legislation going through the House last year. With the makeup of the board of Canagrex, including the president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture as chairman of the board, a director of the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board, a former chairman of the board, as well as other producers, I had hoped that members of the Official Opposition would have accepted this. I find it difficult to accept their comments which question the competence of those people in responsible positions, working in partnership with producers and processors to obtain a larger share of the export markets. This organization was put in place to exploit our export potential. It is not only for the benefit of farmers, but also for farmers working in unison with others in the food chain.

I find it somewhat difficult to accept the suggestion that adjustments in capital gains tax will not be of much value. One Member who spoke this morning indicated that if someone wanted to take back a mortgage he would not have the money