

Adjournment Debate

the world, now just beginning to be developed by the people of Alberta. In closing I wish to remind the minister of the petition he has received from 29 cattle producers along the south side of the Suffield Pasture.

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, it would seem that the hon. member in reality was addressing his remarks tonight to the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. It may have been that he expected my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. McIsaac), would be here tonight. My information was that the question was directed to the Department of National Defence. If there has been a mix-up in that regard I apologize to the hon. member, but it is certainly no fault of mine.

The hon. member stated that he was making his proposal in the utmost sincerity. I want to assure him that there is no doubt concerning his sincerity in respect of the case he is putting forward. I do not have very much information to add. My minister dealt with this problem during the question period and again last week during the adjournment debate. During the course of that debate, as recorded at page 11450 of *Hansard*, he stated:

The Suffield range is held by the federal government primarily for military training purposes. The range can, however, be of very real benefit to cattlemen in the area, particularly in times of emergency and in periods of drought, as it has been in the past. It seems to me it would be best for all concerned, including the cattlemen, if the range is kept as a reserve for emergencies, as in the past, and not used for grazing on a continuous basis. If the range is used each year for continuous grazing there will be no extra pasture available during periods of drought.

Later on in the same answer he said:

... I see no reason why we should not give full consideration to re-opening it in future years in special circumstances, as we have done in the past.

I wish to emphasize that the Suffield range is held by the Department of National Defence primarily for defence purposes. The decision with regard to the disposal of the range in the final analysis is a decision of the Minister of National Defence. He has made the decision. The range is and will continue to be administered by the Department of National Defence. His decision for this year is that there will be no use of the range for pasture unless an emergency situation arises.

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY—REQUEST FOR ESTIMATE OF REAL GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, this debate tonight arises out of a question I put to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) on December 16, 1975. At that time I referred to the information brought out by the former minister of finance that in 1975 there would be a real growth in the economy of 4 per cent and that the employment increase in 1975 would be a quarter of a million of new jobs.

The minister on December 16 really did not answer my question. The supplementary question I put concerned what his predictions were for 1976. He stated that the real growth, in his opinion, would be 5 per cent. He said that his aspiration is 5 per cent, but made no comment concerning job creation.

[Mr. Hargrave.]

● (2210)

Just last Friday, as recorded at page 11531 of *Hansard*, the minister was asked further questions by my colleague from this party concerning the economy, and specifically what steps the government is taking to improve the growth performance in the economic sector. I was most startled to read the answers given by the Minister of Finance last Friday because virtually all he did was to read from Statistics Canada, and I can only presume that those statistics have so confused the minister that he does not know the sad state in which we find ourselves in 1976. I think it is good to put this on the record and I hope the parliamentary secretary tonight will shed some light concerning the present attitude of the Department of Finance with respect to the Canadian economy. I suggest that the Minister of Finance appears to be trying to justify the sad economic performance that we have experienced in Canada over the last 18 months. Let us look at the facts.

As I have stated, in November of 1974 the then minister of finance predicted that we would have a 4 per cent real growth last year. In reality it was two tenths of one per cent, and even by December 16, the day to which I referred, the present Minister of Finance would not admit that the government had failed. What is the cost of that failure, what is the cost of not producing a 4 per cent real growth in our economy? It is a loss of \$4.2 billion or \$420 per taxpayer. That is the shortfall that the government experienced in 1975, and I believe it is time it admitted it to the Canadian public.

If the Minister of Finance wants to read Statcan figures let him tell the public the real truth, namely, that there was a loss of over \$4 billion from the projected figures in 1975. To put that in perspective, a \$4 billion loss is enough to pay our whole debt interest charge in a year in this country. It would build 111,253 living units in the country, that is, 40 per cent of the total number of apartments and homes built in 1975. That is a colossal shortfall for any government to have within the few short months to which I have referred.

To put it on a per capita basis—I think that is perhaps the most significant figure for the average Canadian—the loss in 1975 was \$67 per person, that is, the average person in 1975 compared to 1974 was \$67 less well off than he was the previous year. That is Liberal progress. If you want to refer to the decline in percentage terms on a per capita basis, the decline in 1975 was 1.4 per cent from 1974. Now we are told by the same Minister of Finance that there may be an increase of 5 per cent in the current year. But with that 5 per cent increase, if it is achieved, and do not be surprised if it is not, it would mean that in the last two years the real growth on a per capita basis in this country has only been 1.9 per cent over a two year period. Imagine, less than 1 per cent a year in a country with the resources and the vibrance that is ours in Canada.

In the question that I put to the minister on December 16 I asked him about job creation. The previous minister had indicated that 250,000 jobs would be created. In December it appeared that only 123,000 jobs were going to be created, well short of the initial target. Now we have the figures up to date. For 1975 we find that there were only 108,000 new jobs created but, most alarmingly, in the manufacturing sector there was an actual decline of 99,000 jobs in 1975