

*Supply*

**Mr. Evans:** Mr. Speaker, I have taken note of the question and the number and I will look into it. I will try to get an answer to the Hon. Member as soon as possible.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Shall the remaining questions stand?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 62—TOURIST INDUSTRY

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Jelinek:

That this House condemns the Government for having allowed Canada's tourism deficit to reach a staggering \$2.1 billion in 1983, and having thus caused over 100,000 Canadian jobs to be lost in that year alone, and for failing to remedy the overtaxation which is the underlying problem which plagues this labour-intensive industry and which pushes prices to non-competitive levels thereby counteracting any positive impact that might be generated by the government's marketing expenditures.

**Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta):** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the House for setting aside this day for a debate on tourism. It is not a subject that gets a lot of attention in this House, certainly not the kind of attention it deserves. I suppose it is because the budgets of other Departments, whether it be Health and Welfare, Energy or any other Department, are so large. It seems that in our country the value system is built entirely on budgets, dollar value and so forth.

There are other reasons why this is an important subject. Tourism is important if for no other reason than that there is a natural desire on the part of our citizens to know, enjoy and understand their country. They deserve to be able to travel throughout the country and enjoy the benefits of their land. I wish to add that it is not right that in many cases the Government, rather than helping our people visit the rest of the country, throws impediments in their path by making it more difficult for them to see their country. It is good for our people because it is good for their health to be able to get around.

Beyond that, it is good for people of other countries to visit us. It is good for our relationship with other countries. All Members will agree that when people from other countries visit our land, they never forget its beauty and grandeur and the hospitality of its people. It is wrong for the Government not to make it as easy as possible for the tourism industry of Canada to survive and prosper. That is the burden of my remarks.

It is ironic that for other industries our geography is their impediment, but for the tourism industry it is a bonus. The

very fact that we have large spaces and large sections of country that are mountainous is for every other industry an impediment, but it is an asset for the tourism industry. All of that is free except for the cost of providing access to it. In other industries, travel and transportation are the obstacle. In the tourism industry, travel and transportation are the pleasure. It is an indescribable God-given heritage that is ours but which we are not exploiting properly.

After listening to the remarks of the Minister and other speakers, I wish to say that it is not that the Government is doing nothing for tourism that bothers us. I will concede, as have other Members, that the Minister in charge of tourism is spending megabucks on advertising in the United States, particularly in periodicals in the northern states. That will have a beneficial effect upon the tourism industry in Canada. I think all of us would concede that. As the Minister mentioned this morning, the Government is literally spending hundreds of millions of dollars helping to build and perhaps subsidize convention centres across Canada so that conventioners, particularly from the United States, will find Canada an attractive place in which to hold conventions. That is a given.

● (1520)

The problem is not that the Government does not do some things, but rather that it has a shallow understanding of people dynamics or tourist dynamics. Because the Government does not understand people dynamics, its policies contradict each other and sometimes cancel each other out, so that one government department is trying to encourage tourism and another department is putting impediments or taxes in the way so that tourism is in fact discouraged.

Let me say as an aside that my home overlooks the United States border, so I understand somewhat the accessibility of the tourism market. It is easy for Canadians to go down to the United States and save 25 per cent to 30 per cent on a tank of gas. American tourists can come up the western coast of the United States, tank up and spend \$25 for a tank of gas in the State of Washington, or come to Canada and pay \$35 for the same tank of gas. If one is driving a recreational vehicle, that does not encourage tourism. As the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) pointed out this morning, since two-thirds of that extra cost is government taxes, it seems government has some influence on whether or not it encourages tourism in Canada.

I would like to illustrate how these policies contradict each other. On the one hand the Minister advertises in the northern states in order to encourage particularly Americans from those states to come to Canada and spend their dollars here. On the other hand the Government puts a 9 per cent tax on the printing of tourism advertising which sends those dollars to the United States as a result. On the one hand they are trying to encourage; on the other they are trying to discourage.

The Minister may well be right that the Government is subsidizing or at least helping with construction and spending hundreds of millions of dollars on convention centres. Hon. Members will recall that several years ago there was almost a