

Government Orders

On the question of tourism, while it may be true that in specific places there may be some thought that a ferry crossing is a tourist event of some significance, one does not, to quote the hon. member's words, feel like a sack of potatoes on a ferry. I would think the majority of tourists would dissent from that view.

It certainly seems to be true that the people of Prince Edward Island dissent from that view. There will be more tourism. There will be more economic activity. All of the studies seem to confirm that view. The people of Prince Edward Island expressed that view in the plebiscite.

In that respect the hon. member may have a particular case, but it is not the general case.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a privilege to participate in this debate on the amendment to the Canadian Constitution as it relates to the Prince Edward Island terms of union.

I have had two occasions to visit Prince Edward Island. My stays were not long enough. The first time I arrived by air and the second time I arrived on the island by ferry.

The island is beautiful. The residents of Prince Edward Island have much to be proud of. There are a lot of farmers on the island. Earlier we heard from the hon. member for Malpeque whom I notice has the same problem as I do in that he forgets to button up his jacket when he is speaking before the House. It must be a weakness of those of us who have earned our living by farming. I would also just mention that the best bowl of clam chowder I have ever had was in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

I am not opposed to Charlottetown. I am not opposed to Prince Edward Island. I am not opposed to building and I am not even opposed to this project in principle. However I believe it is time to look at the process, to look at cost and to assess whether this is the right decision for Canada at this time.

Some constitutional issues have been brought forward by other speakers, particularly from our caucus. I totally concur with the member for Calgary West who questioned why this was such an important issue but Senate reform had to be put on the back burner.

Senate reform seems to be taboo in the House as far as the government is concerned, while amendments to the Constitution that affect Prince Edward Island, that have affected New Brunswick in relation to language laws in the last Parliament seem to be no problem whatsoever. The discussion on property rights in this House seems to be taboo and cannot be brought forward. However the principle of aboriginal self-government seems to be quite appropriate and has been discussed at length in this House.

I do not want to dwell on constitutional issues. I believe the fiscal crunch facing Canada is the priority for most Canadians. I would like to make my address primarily on the fiscal aspects of this project and the prioritization we as Canadians and we as members of Parliament need to expose ourselves to.

Megaprojects are wonderful. They grab headlines. A megaproject was completed in my riding. It had been promised for many elections before it was completed. Finally in the 1988 election it was promised and actually was completed, at considerably more cost than was projected I might add. In fact governments have been trying to opt out of funding this megaproject because they were not able to meet the estimated cost of the project. However megaprojects do grab headlines. They are vote getters and attention getters.

Unfortunately tax relief for the middle class does not seem to be as popular. It does not seem to get the headlines. Therefore politicians and governments tend to forget about that aspect when projecting the business of this House and introducing orders and bills.

A few thousand very costly jobs seem to be quite an attention getter. From what I am able to determine the cost of each job created, and these are just temporary jobs by the way, is approximately \$310,000 per person year. That is a pretty rich plan if you ask me.

However long term low unemployment as a strategy does not seem to be attainable by this government. It seems to be a much lower priority. Oftentimes it seems to be forgotten. We all know that the private sector is the job creator and the way to create jobs is to reduce the tax burden on our private and small businesses so they can generate jobs and lower the unemployment situation which is intolerably high.

• (1745)

Hibernia is another megaproject—no problem. As an attention getter, a vote buyer it is going ahead. However, can we put a cap on federal spending? No, that is just unreasonable. We have to forget that.

I believe it is time that the government laid out in frank terms its priorities to all Canadians. We have had a lot of motherhood and apple pie stuff. A lot of it is in the famous red book. The naked truth is that as a nation we are over \$500 billion in debt. That is over half a trillion dollars in debt and it is not a time when we can say we would like to do this or that. Rather, it is a time of deciding what we must do to maintain a reasonable standard of living and pass on a heritage to our children of which they can be truly proud.

It is time that we as leaders of our country must listen to Canadians to find out what their priorities are and then try to represent those priorities in this House in the legislation we support and in the decisions we make.