

• (1740)

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to rise to speak in this debate concerning western Canada. This is the time of year when the people of western Canada are buoyed up. They are feeling good about the world and themselves. It is the time of year when one thinks about the holiday season. However, I must say that in western Canada today people are feeling rather grim. There is a feeling of pessimism and in some quarters, I would say, it touches on resentment. There is a feeling of despair as a result of the economic tragedy which has struck western Canada. They look forward to the next two or three years and wonder about their children and their friends. There is a sense of uncertainty, of frustration and a certain fear of the future. Over the last little while, despite a number of actions taken by the Government, there has been nothing done to really set those fears and frustrations aside.

I must say that I could apply my speech to the former Liberal Government as well considering what it did to western Canada. My constituency, unfortunately, was the part of Canada which received the index finger from the then Prime Minister. We have never forgotten that. It was symbolic throughout all of western Canada of a betrayal. It showed how the Liberal Government actually felt about western Canadians. We recall with horror the 22 per cent interest rates which existed for western Canadian businesses, homeowners, farmers and ranchers. We remember the western development fund which was heralded as the \$4 billion initiative fund to encourage business in western Canada. It evaporated into thin air. We never saw the western development fund. We never heard about it after it was first introduced in this House as a concept. That again showed just to what extent the Liberal Government of the day was committed to the people of western Canada and their concerns.

I find it incredible when I consider the plight of western Canadians and the fact that the Liberals had virtually 20 years in public office to meet many of their concerns and to respond to them. Quite frankly, that Government did very little. I think it would be too simplistic to say that it did nothing; it must have done something, but the treatment western Canadians received at the hands of the former Liberal Government was rather pathetic. Things have not changed very much.

**Mr. Hopkins:** Can you not write a new speech?

**An Hon. Member:** We've heard that one before.

**Mr. Riis:** My Liberal friends say it sounds as if I had said this before. Indeed I have, and I will say it again. For the next two years, up until the next federal election, I plan to say it at every opportunity I get just to remind people that a swing back to the Liberals means going back in time to the old days, which were not the good old days. Those times were very tough for western Canadians, and I want to make that perfectly clear.

**Mr. Hawkes:** The dark ages.

### Supply

**Mr. Riis:** But let us talk about the present Government. Has it provided leadership in terms of changing things for the better in western Canada? No.

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Mr. Riis:** Has it shown a new sense of commitment? No.

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Mr. Hopkins:** Wrong questions, wrong answers.

**Mr. Riis:** It is getting late in the day and obviously there are opposing views to those questions. Let us consider what the Government has done. There was an aid package for farmers. There was an aid package for the ranchers in western Canada who experienced drought conditions. There was a rescue package for the banks which collapsed. In other words, the actions taken by the Government for western Canadians have been bail-outs, rescue packages or programs in terms of disaster funds. It has tried to cut the losses of western Canadian producers in one commodity or another. These are rescue packages; bail-outs. They are reactive programs, not proactive programs.

Western Canadians do not want hand-outs. They do not want to receive welfare from the federal Government. They do not want giveaways. They want a strong economy on which they can build for the future of their children and their children's children. They want to see some leadership from the Government. They want to see some action instead of reaction, which is all they have seen so far. The Government reacted to a troubled banking industry, to a troubled farming industry, to a troubled forest sector and fisheries sector.

Where is the leadership? Where are the programs which will help western Canadians carry on and contribute to the development of Canada? We have seen that action in other parts of our country. I want to be very specific because I realize that often we can describe situations and people will ask: "What is your factual information to substantiate that allegation?" I simply have to look at one of the most important arms of Government in assisting economic industrial development, and that is DRIE.

When one looks at the amount of funds which have been distributed since the Conservative Government took office, a very interesting picture is revealed. For example, the amount of industrial assistance between September, 1984, and March, 1986, for British Columbia was \$47 million. Saskatchewan received \$18 million; Alberta received \$16 million; Manitoba received \$30 million; the Yukon received \$3 million. Those amounts total \$114 million. Interestingly enough, an area of similar population, Quebec, received not \$114 million but \$430 million. Ontario received \$260 million. When we consider areas of relatively equal population, that is setting apart any discussion about the difficult economic times these various regions face, western Canada has received significantly less of the DRIE funds than either Ontario or Quebec. I want to use that very specific example as a criterion upon which we can