

The corporate tax system must also be revamped. In the past year many corporations have made hundreds of millions of dollars in profits. We have nothing against that; we like to see a healthy economy. But if a company is going to make hundreds of millions of dollars in profit, as the Bank of Montreal did last year, then we expect it to pay its fair share of income tax and not, as some firms have been able to do through tax loopholes, avoid paying a single red cent in income tax.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Order, please. I have to interrupt the Hon. Member because his time has expired. Of course, he could continue his remarks with the unanimous consent of the House. It is agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Fisher: Mr. Speaker, we would be delighted to agree. I know the Hon. Member is getting into the positive part of his speech and we would like to hear that. I would simply remind him that we have a speaker on this side who would like to talk before lunchtime.

Mr. Riis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party and the Liberal Party for their positive gesture. I will keep my remarks brief and finish my speech in the next few minutes.

As my Leader has suggested on many occasions, Mr. Speaker, one of the ways to deal with the deficit would be to reconsider some of the \$10 billion presently handed out in tax concessions and grants to the corporate sector. I do not think it is unfair to say to the corporate sector that if it expects the taxpayers of Canada to assist it in certain ways through tax concessions or grants, some accountability is required. We are entitled to expect some kind of performance either through research and development initiatives, job creation, job training, or the purchase of new plant and equipment from Canadian suppliers. In other words, tax concessions should be tied to a meaningful contribution to the economy. I cannot imagine that anyone would seriously argue against that. I believe the corporate sector would welcome that initiative.

Mr. Broadbent: Instead of a free lunch.

Mr. Riis: We could do away with the free lunches. We are against the concept of simply giving out grants and expecting nothing in return.

Something that has been overlooked in the Budget and has not been commented upon as yet by the Official Opposition is interest rates. In this Party we feel that we cannot have real, sustained economic recovery with interest rates at their present level and with the potential for volatility that we have seen in the last months and years. It is now appropriate for the Minister of Finance, through the Bank of Canada, to take active, positive steps to reduce the interest rates and maintain them at lower levels. The spread between the inflation rate and the interest rate in this country is greater today than ever before in our history. It is time the difference was reduced and interest rates brought down so that people can afford mort-

The Budget—Mr. Deniger

gages and expand their small businesses, their farms, ranches and various economic endeavours. This is the kind of major and bold step that members of the New Democratic Party feel is absolutely necessary for a sustained recovery.

We would also like to expand the job development potential in key sectors of the economy by investing in the infrastructure of those sectors. In simpler terms, the forest industry, for example, is important all across the country. In five out of ten provinces it is a major industry and it is a significant industry in every province, yet it is in dire straits. It is suffering from lack of private and public investment. Is there a better time to invest public sector money in the development of reforestation or the development of salmonid enhancement programs of salmon habitat protection? We do not call this government spending but, rather, serious investment in the economy of Canada.

That is what is required and it must be done next year or within two or three years. We say now is the time to do it because such investment would put hundreds of thousands of Canadians to work immediately in jobs that would bring about a sustained recovery and economic development. In turn, this would generate an increase in tax revenues through corporate and personal income tax for federal coffers. That is the kind of investment we would like to see.

We would like the Government to do some planning. It should sit down with the private sector, with labour and with regional governments to plan what we want to accomplish in the next ten years. It should set out a strategy for the economy and regional strategies that everyone can support and identify with. In that way we could get on with developing the economy. This reeling and wheeling from crisis to crisis, this stumbling about, this ad hocery in terms of economic development, is not good enough. The Budget that was introduced a few hours ago is just one more step in the same direction. There is a lack of vision, a lack of concept or vision about what the country could and should be doing.

This Party feels that the Budget demonstrates that most Canadians have not been heard, Mr. Speaker. Their concerns must be taken into account in these difficult times, their plight must be unveiled and their interest must be represented in the House of Commons.

Today and in subsequent days during this debate the New Democratic Party will represent those voices. The people of Canada have been left out of this document.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Deniger (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise on the first day of the debate on the Budget for the 1984-1985 fiscal year. It is a pleasure, Mr. Speaker, because this fiscal year marks the beginning of a period of consolidating what the Government's economic policy has achieved.