

When I go door to door or store to store in my riding in the next election and they ask me what the Liberal Party stands for, I will tell them to look at our record over the last 50 years and they will see that Liberals put Canadians to work. Liberals create more jobs than any other party and, quite frankly, I would rather have a little bit of debt on the nation's Treasury but let Canadians have their dignity and have them working.

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister for Science and Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, I see my hon. colleague wanted to speak. I will be brief. Maybe there will be time for him too.

My hon. friend says that Liberal governments put people to work. During the tremendous boom of 1985 to 1990 the Liberal Government of Ontario put people to work this way. It hired over 18,000 public servants. That is how it put people to work. In the middle of a boom it added to public servants.

We read last week that the NDP government in Ontario is to lay off 18,000 people.

Does he believe that the way to create jobs is to hire public servants? Is that the Liberal approach, because if it is, it is not the NDP approach it seems any more, or the Conservative approach.

Mr. Mills: Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe the minister put that question to me. He knows full well that it is not the approach of the Liberal Party of Canada. The Liberal Party of Canada, and he knows this full well as I have said it in the House 150 times in the last three years, believes in entrepreneurship. The Liberal Party believes in small business.

• (1600)

There are over 960,000 small businesses in this country. Perhaps we could get the bill of the minister advertised and get the banks of Canada, instead of getting the CDIC to guarantee Edper, Campeau, Central Guaranty and the Royal Trustco, to help small business. He can find \$10 billion for those people but he cannot find money to advertise to small business.

That is what is wrong with this government. We are not asking it to create a bureaucracy. We oppose red tape as much as anyone but we hate it ripping the heart and guts out of small business. The government is doing it by

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creating expectations with the Small Businesses Loans Act and not communicating the reality to the banks and the people that it is available.

When the minister talks about David Peterson and his Liberal Party hiring 18,000 public servants, I am not sure his facts are absolutely right. I will give him the benefit of the doubt that he did hire them. During that period he also balanced the budget.

Mr. Pat Sobeski (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. The hon. member raises a valid point about the underground economy. It seems to me back in 1981 when we had our last recession we had electricians and others unemployed. It was quite common when we went into the Legion to have a beer to hear people talking about whether so-and-so could do a job for cash under the table.

What he suggests in 1991 was just as true in 1980. When he expresses concern about going in and talking about the Small Businesses Loans Act, does he not feel better knowing that businesses have a better chance? If we went back to 1981 the prime bank rate was 22 per cent. Today he has to say because of these Tories and Tory policies the bank rate is 6.75 per cent. That must make businessmen feel a little more assured.

What about the consumer he bumps into who 10 years ago, back in 1981, had a five-year mortgage rate at 21.75 per cent? How does he explain to them today the difficulty and that the rate is under 9 per cent? How does he match the two?

Mr. Mills: Mr. Speaker, I can respond to that quite easily. First of all, when we talk about the global recession that took place in 1980-81, the interest rates in the United States were close to 16.5 per cent and 17 per cent. Let us compare apples and apples.

The difference between 1981 and 1991 is that we had in our budget at that time a special recovery program. We did incur a little bit of debt to the Treasury but we built things. We built airports, things that we needed, non-optional use facilities. We built infrastructure because we would much rather pay people. We would much rather pay people to be out working with their hands and their minds than to give them a welfare cheque and have them sitting at home watching videos.