

The Address—Mr. Witer

Hamilton airport is that it is nearly as hard to find and nearly as hard to get to as Mirabel and that there is no decent highway to that airport. There could be, with a two or three-mile road connected to the 403, a first-class access to the airport. Since there is no such access, it is virtually impossible for anyone to find that airport and it takes a great while to get there.

Would the Hon. Member use her best influence with the Peterson Government to make the airport more accessible? After all, highway transportation is a provincial responsibility. The federal Government has put its money up for the terminal. Surely to goodness it is time the province did something about the highway.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, very briefly, I live in Hamilton's east end and I can tell the Hon. Member that I probably know the road system a little better than he does. I can be at the Hamilton airport, barring a few speeding tickets, within about 15 minutes coming from the far east end of Hamilton. Those Hon. Members who are familiar with the airport will know that it is located in the far southwest end. Transportation is not the problem. Designation is the problem.

When it comes to transportation, the Hon. Member will realize that the new Liberal Government in Ontario, which will obviously be elected with a majority representation in Ontario very soon, has only been in power for a little more than a year. It will have been in power for two years by next June. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, that Government was handed such a mess when it came to the transportation system of Ontario that while it is trying its darndest, it is finding it tough. The Government will continue to try its darndest but such a mess was left behind that it will take a little longer than a year and a half to fix up the situation.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I know that you would not want me to let this occasion go by without congratulating the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) for making what is obviously the finest speech we have heard today if not for a long time in the House of Commons. I see that the Hon. Member for Westmorland—Kent (Mr. Robichaud) agrees and his wisdom tells me that I am correct.

I would like to ask my colleague, the Hon. Member for Hamilton East, about the footwear and textile industries. I have noted, of course, that in the Throne Speech, the Government did not address either of those two issues. These issues are very important to the constituency of the Hon. Member for Hamilton East as they are to mine, particularly in the face of the devastating Tory policies which have caused the loss of so many jobs in the footwear industry in Alexandria which is in my riding, areas in the riding of the Hon. Member for Hamilton East and other areas of the Niagara Peninsula which do not have the good fortune of being represented by as good an Hon. Member as the Hon. Member for Hamilton East.

I wonder if the Hon. Member could tell us, on behalf of those other ridings that do not have the benefit at this time of

someone who speaks forcefully in the House of Commons, how many jobs have been lost in the footwear industry as a result of the devastating Tory policy that was passed in the House of Commons a year ago. Perhaps she could tell us as well how many jobs are left in the footwear industry as a result of those unfortunate Conservative policies.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of participating in a footwear task force which travelled through southwestern Ontario. As you may know, Mr. Speaker, I am the lone Liberal MP located between Toronto and Windsor so my interest in these matters spreads beyond the City of Hamilton. Obviously I have to find out what is happening in Cambridge, Kitchener, Mississauga and other areas most directly affected by the footwear cut-backs. I think the most difficult situation is that being faced by a number of workers who have been laid off. There have been plant closings in Oakville, in the Halton region, in Cambridge, in the City of London as well as in the City of Hamilton. The Government made a lot of promises about having new programs for modification to get the workers, primarily older workers, back into the workforce. Unfortunately, not only have hundreds of jobs disappeared, but no displacement programs have been put in place. That is why I referred in my speech to the absolutely uncaring attitude of the Government that cancelled a program dealing with older workers and employees of the footwear industry, namely, the LAB Program. Those workers could have been covered under the previous Liberal program if there had been a closing or if there had been significant lay-offs. That program was cancelled following a promise by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) that we would have another older worker's program in place by August, 1986. The program is still on the drawing boards and we now see the Minister of Finance blaming the provinces for not participating. That obviously has to be a first priority. I will be holding the Government to account on the lack of its fulfilment of its promise to older workers.

● (1650)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. Debate. The Hon. Member for Parkdale—High Park (Mr. Witer).

Mr. Andrew Witer (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, first, allow me to extend my sincere congratulations to you on your re-appointment as Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole House. I am confident that I speak for all Members of the House when I say that Parliament will be well served by your acknowledged experience and ability.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Witer: I would also like to extend my congratulations to the Hon. Member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) on his historic election as Speaker of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!