

*Supply*

we will look at it. I thank the hon. member for his questions and comments.

**Mr. Forrestall:** Mr. Chairman, my intervention will be relatively brief. I might say at the outset that it continues to be a disappointment—although I am pleased to see the Minister of State for Mines in the chamber at present—that the Minister of Employment and Immigration is left to his own devices this evening, as was the Minister of Transport last week. Of course, the exercise we are going through is a brand new one for most members in this chamber. For some of us it is a welcome return to what democracy is all about, a welcome return to what we lost some time ago when the House gave up any control over the spending by the executive. It takes us back to a point when there was real control by the House over the executive. What we may have right now is a bit of a sham, but it is pleasant to remember. In that context, I wish that other treasury bench members had exhibited sufficient concern, as does the Minister of State for Mines, the only other minister present in the House, for employment and approaches to employment in this country to have been here to personally monitor the debate.

I look up to the galleries and, apart from the minister's officials, I see none of the young whiz kids, the bright executive assistants. I do not see any of them. There is only one lone representative of the Canadian Press, a couple of constables and a handful of government supporters who are obviously sincere. They are here to support the minister. A number of our people are here because they are interested in employment and immigration problems. For example, I wish the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce were here and I wish the Minister of Labour were here. Or is this the night when he and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources get their walking papers and are given other responsibilities? Perhaps the minister might comment on that. Will there be a change, or can he bring an end to these rumours that have persisted over radio and other electronic press media in the last two or three hours? I wish these ministers were here because many of the questions which the Minister of Employment and Immigration has been answering last week and today have to do with the creation of job opportunities. Of course, that is not his responsibility. I should like to ask him about an Atlantic industrial strategy. What are we going to do in that respect? For example, is the minister aware of the extraordinary high unemployment levels among the blacks in Atlantic Canada? If the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre would move away from the minister's officials so that they might listen to me for a minute, or, instead, speak to the minister, who is not particularly concerned either, I would be grateful. I wish the minister would speak about a strategy for the Atlantic provinces where, as he must be aware, we are suffering from chronic—not unemployment, but underemployment. I am not sure that we can learn from the minister and I am not sure he is the proper man to ask, but I wish we could learn about an Atlantic strategy with respect to ridding us of this underemployment and unemployment difficulty which we continue to have. I wish the Minister of National Health and Welfare and the minister responsible

for social matters were here so that I might ask them questions, but I will put my question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration because I am sure he is capable of answering it.

● (2100)

I am concerned about the drain on the national fund and also the reasons for it. What consideration has the government given in recent years to diverting moneys from the unemployment insurance fund into the area of identification and correction of learning disabilities? Concerned professional people have indicated that in this area the strain on the fund is enormous and that even a token transfer of funds to identification and correction at a very early age could save taxpayers enormous amounts of money. I have listened to the minister wax philosophically. Could he perhaps address himself to that question for a moment or two, and then I will have one or two others for him?

**Mr. Axworthy:** Mr. Chairman, before answering the hon. member specifically, I should like to relate my own nostalgic memory about this exercise of estimates when I was a member of the provincial House. We went through this exercise on an annual basis and some 90 hours were devoted to the examination of the estimates of different ministerial departments. Of course, the only difference is that this time I am on the other side. If one had to make a choice in this exercise, I suppose one would find at certain times that it is more fun being in opposition than in government.

**An hon. Member:** Not as a long-term project.

**Mr. Axworthy:** That is right. However, it has certain short-term gains.

There is already an opportunity under the unemployment insurance fund to transfer money directly into training programs. It is our expectation that this year close to \$200 million from the fund will be reallocated into training recipients rather than simply putting them on the dole or whatever one would want to call it. Since 1977 we have had the right to transfer funds, and the \$200 million is being reallocated in a fairly successful way. We intend to look at it even further as part of the task force review which is presently under way. We will consider how to better allocate our resources into job training and employment funds on a longer-term basis. That is one reason we introduced the LEDA program—to see how we could use the funds for investment directly in communities. Perhaps the hon. member for Bow River will be interested in this because he asked how we could get small business back into business again. Through a concept like LEDA, we hope we can go into smaller communities like the ones which exist in the maritimes, for example, and provide start-up grants for small businesses to create longer-term jobs. It would be a way of establishing an economic development program as opposed to simply a job-creation program. This is one of the things we are trying out.