

Supply

debate as well and therefore, regretfully, I cannot give unanimous consent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is not unanimous consent so we will proceed with questions or comments. If there are none, we will proceed to debate.

Mr. Mel Gass (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak on what is our second Opposition Day debate on tourism. Less than a year ago this Party, trying to raise the tourism profile in Canada and trying to impress upon Canadians and the Government the importance of tourism, used an Opposition Day to do just that. Since that first day back in April of 1983, the Conservative Party and caucus received many favourable responses to our efforts from the provinces and from many tourists and businesses. In most of those responses people shared the sentiments we expressed. They agreed the Government has neglected tourism over the past few years. They urged that tourism be treated more as a business than as a source of revenue for the federal Government. Most people expressed feelings that the Government does not understand the industry and has paid only lip service to the tourist operators.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, one businessman related tourism to the story of Cinderella. We, the Conservative Party, could be the prince after the next election who finds Cinderella and puts the industry in the perspective it truly deserves. We intend to make the country aware of the importance of this industry to job creation in Canada.

We received many letters congratulating us on our efforts in proposing and debating the Opposition Day motion on tourism, and they suggested ways in which we could improve the industry. I feel that our Opposition Day was a success in that it raised the industry's profile in the eyes of many people. Unfortunately, it did not do so in the eyes of the Government. Today, Mr. Speaker, we are here once again to discuss the importance of the tourism industry to Canada's economy.

As I said, I am very happy to be speaking to the motion which the Hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Jelinek) has put forward, condemning the Government for its inattention to the industry and for allowing Canada's tourism deficit to grow to \$2.1 billion, thereby creating a loss of well over 100,000 jobs. The industry employs over 1.14 million people, and one of every ten workers in Canada is employed by the industry, directly or indirectly. The industry is an important employer of people because it provides jobs for both skilled and semi-skilled workers. Tourism is not just an industry found downtown in the middle of large urban areas. The tourist industry employs people in the far-flung corners of the country, out in the rural areas where there are no other types of employment. That is another reason why the industry is so vital to the rural areas of the country.

● (1610)

The tourist industry is very labour-intensive. Due to the fact that this industry is such a major employer of people, I would like to review the industry's travel statistics for 1983. In 1983,

the travel deficit for tourism increased by 57 per cent from 1982. It went from \$1.3 billion in 1982 to \$2.1 billion in 1983. As I said before, Mr. Speaker, this translates into well over 100,000 jobs lost to the people of Canada. At a time when unemployment has reached extremely high proportions, these 100,000 jobs would certainly have been welcome to the unemployed people sitting at home unable to find jobs.

The total number of visitors travelling to Canada from the United States was 30,892,433. This was up only .6 per cent from 1982. In terms of automobile travel, the statistics were the same as for 1982. Plane travel from the United States was down while bus travel was up 8.7 per cent, as were other modes of transportation. The number of visitors from the United States was not up significantly from 1982, even though their dollar is worth much more than the Canadian dollar. There is a real asset in their dollar compared to ours. They have a bonus in coming to Canada and spending their dollars here. However, they are not doing that.

The number of people travelling to Canada from other countries as well was down a whopping percentage from 1982. This drastic decrease in travel from other countries certainly shows the neglect that Canada's advertising is receiving abroad. Foreigners have the perception that Canada is an expensive country to visit. The high costs involved in visiting Canada are driving people to vacation in other areas. This is the fault of over-pricing which has occurred due to the high taxes and prices induced by the federal Government as well as other governments.

The number of Canadians travelling to other countries is a very different story. The percentage of Canadians visiting the United States is up 17.5 per cent from 1982. This increase means that Canadians are not staying in Canada for their vacations, even though they are paying extra money to visit the United States where the exchange rate is 25 per cent to 28 per cent. They have to pay an extra 28 cents on every dollar to visit the United States. One reason for this is that Canadians cannot afford to travel within their own country. Another reason is that many are not aware of the potential for travelling to destinations in Canada. This is the fault of the federal Government. It has increased taxes, raised prices to a level where people cannot travel in Canada, and cut back on the advertising costs over the years. The number of Canadians visiting the U.S. by automobile is up by 20.7 per cent from 1982. Bus travel is up 3.4 per cent. Other forms of transportation are up 13.7 per cent. The reason for this is the low cost of gasoline, accommodation, food and alcohol in the United States as compared with that in Canada. All these factors are taken into consideration by people planning vacations.

The first thing you must do on a vacation is to fill up the car with gas. If it is cheaper in the United States, why not travel there? The next thing is to choose accommodation. Mr. Speaker, if you have travelled in the United States and parts of Canada you will know that accommodation in the United States is somewhat cheaper than in Canada. The next essential item is the cost of meals in restaurants. In Canada the cost of eating in most restaurants is higher than in the United States.