

Supply

An hon. Member: No legal commitment, but there certainly was a moral commitment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think we are straying from the subject of the debate before us. I would recognize again the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Nielsen: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, I think—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, order. I recognize the hon. Minister of Finance.

• (1710)

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): I am perfectly willing to continue the conversation with the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) after hours, and I will do so in the appropriate way.

Mr. Alexander: I want to talk to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Andras).

Mr. Nielsen: Will the minister permit a question at this stage?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): I wonder if I might just finish the argument, and then certainly I will entertain a question from the hon. member for Yukon.

In other words, the provinces asked for, and we are providing, a three-year program that will allow them to undertake global planning and to mount a consistent and effective attack against unemployment. Any slashing or dividing of this authorization will completely destroy the effectiveness of the program. It would convert it into a short-term plan, a stop and go work-related program and would have a disruptive effect on the planning of municipalities which will receive federal funds through provincial governments.

I say this new long-term program will give the provinces and municipalities more time to plan properly and to implement employment programs, avoiding inappropriate use of funds which sometimes results from shorter one year programs. That would be the result of the suggestion of the hon. member for Yukon. Frankly, we consider this to be a major attack on seasonal winter unemployment in this country, and whether or not some hon. members consider it to be sufficient is a matter of argument. If the opposition wants to cripple it, that is the business of the opposition.

An hon. Member: Oh, come on; get off it.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): That is the business of the government.

Mr. Nielsen: That is a gross distortion.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): The provinces need this authorization before the contracts within the authorization are valid and before any loans can be offered. Frankly, I think the people of this country ought to recognize that this is just legalistic tinkering by the Conservative party with the lives of the unemployed of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Mr. Andras.]

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the remarks of the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) and to those of the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner).

What is the essence of vote L12a, which the House is being asked to pass to the amount of \$350 million to create a Winter Capital Projects Fund? In his speech, the minister gave no details on the administration of this program. This is the only thing that troubles our party. We are told that the government is to spend \$350 million for a Winter Capital Projects Fund. This money will be distributed among the provinces on a per capita basis. The type of assistance will be a loan, the purpose will be the creation of jobs and the period will be December 6, 1972, to June 30, 1975.

The minister would like to be granted a three-year mandate to fight unemployment in Canada. However, the government has been trying for four years to fight it and has met with no success. Still they are to be granted a three-year mandate.

Mr. Speaker, everything the minister has just said is very fine; it is extraordinary to see his determination to fight unemployment, for once, in co-operation with other levels of government, and this is appreciable. But from the moment he wants to co-operate with provincial and municipal governments to lick unemployment in Canada and at the same time promote investments and the implementation of long-desired projects, the minister who is concerned about public finance should at the same time be preoccupied about the financial situation of provinces and municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, in the detail of vote L12a, on page 16 of Supplementary Estimates, it is stated that the government shall grant loans to the provinces under the following conditions: every one of these loans must be secured by the obligations of the province or municipality—their indebtedness is still increased—and the obligation shall be issued to or payable to the credit of the Receiver General for Canada.

Which means, as stated in sub-paragraph (i) of paragraph (b) of this vote, that through the Department of Finance the federal government becomes some kind of finance company for the provinces in order to create employment.

This vote provides also that the term to maturity is 20 years or such lesser period as may be fixed by the Minister of Finance.

About this matter, I would like the Minister of Finance to take the trouble of giving us an example or the result of discussions that he is deemed to have had with his provincial counterparts, in order that we may know what term the provinces have asked for to repay these loans.

Mr. Speaker, what concerns me most is the following paragraph, and I quote: