

S.O. 31

that bank and the depositors in western Canada. If we put \$1 billion into bailing the eastern banks out of the Dome situation, we will put \$1 billion into trying to rescue this bank and these banks. If we put \$1 billion into Canadair in Quebec so that we could maintain an aircraft industry in this country yes, we will put \$1 billion into this effort on behalf of western Canada.

We make no apologies whatsoever for what we have done on behalf of western Canada. I say that as a proud Member of Parliament and especially as a Member of Parliament coming from Ontario. I want the entire House, especially the New Democratic Party and the Liberals, to understand that. I suggest to my colleagues who go back to towns and cities like Yorkton, Regina, Kamloops and Prince Albert, that on Saturday and Sunday they walk down the street and tell people that they were ridiculing what we were trying to do for western Canada. They should try that on for size when they go back home.

We have learned something else, Mr. Speaker. We have learned that the Liberals, bereft of policy, with their leadership problems, are fastening on to this issue as their only hope to divert attention. We have learned that the New Democratic Party, which does not have a leadership problem—yet—has western Members of Parliament from Manitoba, Saskatchewan—none from Alberta—and British Columbia, who ridicule our efforts to help western Canada.

We have learned most importantly, Mr. Speaker, that the Progressive Conservative Party is determined to make Canada work. We are determined to eliminate regional differences. We are determined to stand by our friends in all regions of this country.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that we support unequivocally the efforts of our colleague, the Minister of State for Finance (Mrs. McDougall), in the case of the Northland Bank.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, the debate which is occurring tonight is a very important one. The stakes are high. In a period of economic restraints and contraction, the sums of moneys involved are indeed very significant. It is with some regret, Mr. Speaker, that I heard the Minister of State for Finance (Mrs. McDougall) deliver her speech this evening. It is unfortunate that she said very little about the state of the Northland Bank. I was hoping that the Minister would tell the House and the nation where things are with the Northland Bank in terms of the negotiations and trying to work out a financial package with some other financial institutions which would allow that financial institution in western Canada to survive. Unfortunately, she said absolutely nothing.

It would seem to me that this opportunity for a debate on the Northland Bank, in particular, would have been used by the Minister to explain to the House what the situation is, where things are right now and why she has committed herself and the Government to bail out all of the uninsured depositors if that institution should go into liquidation. Again, it is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that so far no member of the

Government has risen in the House and really addressed this central question.

Something I find similar between the Canadian Commercial Bank and Pioneer Trust of Regina, Saskatchewan, is that in both places we have Conservative Governments who have the reputation of being business like and knowledgeable in the business world but which are making business decisions without knowing all the facts. They did not know what they were getting into when they made certain decisions. And when they made those decisions, Mr. Speaker, they committed their respective Governments and the taxpayers to millions of dollars.

In the case of the Province of Saskatchewan the Minister of Finance wrote a letter, which became public, stating that the Government of Saskatchewan would guarantee a preferred share issue which, in turn, would bail out Pioneer Trust. He did it without having a look at its books. What business person in his right mind would make a commitment of millions of dollars without having a look at the books? It's unimaginable. Of course, he did finally get around to looking at the books and discovered the true situation. In the words of the Minister of Finance of Saskatchewan, they discovered it was an endless pit and decided that they had better draw back from the brink. It has cost the Province of Saskatchewan some \$24 million or \$28 million. Who knows what the final number will be? In terms of our national Budget, that is not a great sum. To the people of Saskatchewan, that is a very great sum because the Government of the Province of Saskatchewan is cutting back on health care and road construction, on social assistance and on all sorts of important programs. But there is money for the banks.

On the federal level, we have the case of the Canadian Commercial Bank. The same mistake is made. A Tory Government, a Government of men and women who pride themselves on their business acumen, who stated in the last election campaign, "Elect us because we have a good business sense and we are going to restore sound business practices to Government", makes a commitment which is going to cost well over \$1 billion without having a proper look at the books. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and the Minister of State for Finance have told us they had the best information available. We must now, Mr. Speaker, as guardians of the public purse, ask that one central question: Was that good enough? Should they have known that that information was not sufficient? Were there enough indications, warnings and signals that the Government at that time should have realized that the information which was available was not good enough? I believe the answer is a resounding "yes".

One could stand here, Mr. Speaker, and speak for many hours on all the incidents and indications which showed that the Canadian Commercial Bank had some major problems. I understand that when the Minister took over there were warnings about CCB in her briefing book. The very fact that such financial actors as Rosenberg and Howard Eaton were involved in that bank should have been reason enough for the Government to know that things might not be all right. The