

Borrowing Authority

International links have also been actively developed by the private sector. The territorial Government helps northern businesses explore economic opportunities and overseas markets for our products. We also look for new ways to promote the Northwest Territories internationally as an exciting tourism destination, and attract international investors to work with northern residents in developing our economy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I wish to advise the Hon. Member that she is one minute over her 10 minutes, so if she would wind up, please.

Ms. Blondin: I am sure you are aware, Mr. Speaker, that we have many concerns regarding the economy and the Budget that was presented. We do not feel there is a magic solution in dealing with the Budget. However, the spirit and the intent of dealing with the needs of the youth of this country and their future, and the needs of those who have made a major investment in this country, the elderly people, are very important.

The climate the Government is creating in the North is gloom. It is a mistake to think that the Budget only restricts the development of the North's economic resources. It also inhibits the development of our most valuable resource of all, our people.

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak briefly on Bill C-11, the Borrowing Authority Act, by which the Government is asking the House to grant it the authority to borrow some \$25 billion on current accounts.

Yesterday afternoon I returned from three days in Summerside, Prince Edward Island. I went there as my Party's defence critic to listen to the local people, to hear their reactions first hand to the Government's cruel and heartless announcement that it was closing down Base Summerside. This military base and air force base goes back to the days of the Commonwealth air training program of 1941-42.

I wish to say at the outset that I do not think that the mandarins here in Ottawa who advised the Minister of National Defence (Mr. McKnight) that that base should be closed down because it was no longer cost efficient realized the human factors. They did not realize the tremendous negative economic impact that that closure

will have on the citizens of Prince Edward Island. It will not only affect Summerside, a town of some 8,000 people, but indeed it will affect the entire Province of Prince Edward Island. Let me emphasize at the outset that those people and that province do not deserve the treatment they are getting from the Government. Closing down that base will result in the loss of 950 direct jobs at the base. Another 250 civilian jobs will also be eliminated and, indirectly, some 1,700 jobs will also disappear.

• (1220)

Along with the disappearance of those jobs will go approximately \$50 million a year in revenue to Summerside, Prince Edward Island and to the Province of Prince Edward Island. It will mean that the second largest employer in the entire province will go out of business. It will mean that 2.2 per cent of the province's total payroll will disappear. It will mean that jobs with wages averaging some \$34,000 or \$35,000 a year will disappear from the base and the average provincial job with a wage of \$17,000 a year will supposedly take its place. That is not what will happen in Prince Edward Island.

The economy is extremely fragile. There is farming for a couple of months a year. There is tourism and there is some fishery. Even now, under optimum conditions, it is almost impossible to work for ten weeks at a time to get enough unemployment insurance to tide one over until another seasonal job comes along, if one is available.

In addition to closing the base at Summerside, the Government has changed the UIC rules so that now people in Prince Edward Island will have to work at least 15 to 16 weeks in order to qualify for unemployment insurance. I say to the House that that is absolutely impossible for many of the workers in that part of P.E.I.

I did not return from Prince Edward Island with only a negative attitude. I am not here today to say that the Government should keep the base open because Prince Edward Island as a province "deserves at least one military base" since every other province has at least one base, and in some cases several military bases. But I have come back with some very positive alternate suggestions.

It is about time that the Conservative Government got out of its 19th century thinking about defence posture and began to look at what modern thinkers are considering in terms of defence. The traditional meaning of