

Supplementary Borrowing Authority

to take any possible action. There may still exist redundant, useless or overly costly programs. If such programs exist, and they do, I hope that we shall have the courage and the will to eliminate them as quickly as possible, before the next budget, I hope. However, those who suggest that these programs represent billions of dollars are wrong. Most often, it is a case of a few million dollars wasted here and there, of some forgotten agency in some government building, with a few employees who keep on doing some work which is perhaps less important today that it was originally.

A few million dollars, you might say, is a lot of money, which it is indeed, and that is the reason why I urge again the Minister of Finance to scrutinize all government programs from every angle and eliminate those we can do without. But the amount we hope to recuperate will likely look insignificant compare to our huge deficit, and those tens or hundreds of millions of dollars that he might save would not make a big difference in the job creating effort, if he decided to use the money in this area. I, for one, am sorry that we cannot do more for jobless Canadians, especially those who have run out of UI benefits, and I wish we could have allocated more money to this program, but this would have meant a sharp increase in the current deficit.

[English]

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if the Hon. Member would respond to a question dealing with the matter about which he is speaking.

Mr. Lachance: I would be very glad to accommodate the Hon. Member at the end of my remarks.

[Translation]

Therefore, we would have had to increase the current deficit considerably, and under the present circumstances, I think that the minister's modest but significant proposal will enable the most severely affected people to seek government assistance until such time, when the economy is back in full swing and we may be in a position to do more for them.

Canada is a trading nation, something we must not overlook, and in this regard Canadian firms are doing fine. They are holding their own in spite of adverse international circumstances. As of August 31, 1982, Canada had a favourable trade balance to the tune of \$11.1 billion. That is \$4.4 billion more than at the same time last year. Which is proof that the Canadian economy is broyant and that the Minister of Finance is right in stating that as soon as the world economy starts to recover, signs of which are already being felt in the United States, if Canada is in a position to act and benefit from it, it should be able to solve its current problems fairly quickly. Eventually unemployment would decrease and even if it did not decrease as quickly as we would wish, at least the Government could provide better and greater than at present through direct job creation programs. I would now like to refer to social programs, Mr. Speaker, and point out that if there is an area where Canada may be proud of what it has accomplished in

recent decades it is in the social area. This is the reason why with some others I was very much concerned by rumours which have been going around during the past weeks while the Minister of Finance was drafting his economic statement, rumours based on statements or excerpts of statements sometimes quoted out of context. However those rumours have disturbed many Canadians and Parliamentarians. Finally, they were put to rest when some ten days ago the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) at the end of a meeting held at Meach Lake stated unequivocally that the issue, though important and relevant to the reassessment implied in the drafting of a budgetary paper, would be left as such, that it would not be dealt with, but for the moment cuts would perhaps be made elsewhere, while social programs would remain a security net allowing Canadians to hope and anticipate that in case of any hardships, they could rely on the required help to tide them over.

• (1500)

Also Mr. Speaker, I was quite pleased when the minister himself said the following in his statement:

Second, we must not abandon the victims of the recession in the mistaken belief that such callous action might speed our recovery. This Government has worked consistently over several decades to develop a social security system that effectively supports Canadians in need of help. We will not put the axe to that system at the very time when Canadians need it most. More constructively, we will continue to look for ways to improve our social programs and to make them more effective for those who need help.

Some people thought that that matter had been settled. Unfortunately I am again disturbed as a result of some recent statements suggesting that social programs are still under discussion in spite of the Prime Minister's assurance and the statement made by the Minister of Finances and that in these difficult times the Government would consider re-arranging some of its programs. This has led an editor for the newspaper *Le Devoir* to write this morning that it was urgent to clarify the matter because Canadians cannot remain in such a state of uncertainty. Of course, Mr. Speaker, I am the first one to believe that we should review our social programs and try to give those in dire straits more than they get at present. However that appraisal should not be made piecemeal and accompanied by sensational headlines. This study, an analysis, an assessment must be undertaken in a sensible, reasonable and informed manner, and I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that those who are making statements are concerned about the destabilizing factor that those statements may have on the people who are already very worried about general economic conditions and even more so when they hear about the re-organization of programs which they hang on to as safety net just in case of need.

I must therefore thank the Minister of Finance for having put an end as clearly as possible to these discussions and rumors that were circulating, and plead with those who feel obliged to make statements and I beg them to try to keep