

for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone) last Friday, I think that in many ways we are experiencing, if not a real depression, at least a psychological depression because many people have partially given up hoping or believing that anyone knows what they are doing in the country.

I believe many people have rightly looked to the government for some answers. That is fair game and proper. In many cases they have the right to look to government for solutions because the average taxpayer in the country works for one level of government or another. From January 1 to the beginning of June, average Canadian taxpayers have worked approximately five months for government, and when governments take a lot away in terms of their earnings, in terms of their gross national product, or however one wants to define it, I think taxpayers and citizens in general have a right to expect something in return. When so much is taken away from people in the form of taxation, they have a right to expect something back. When the government becomes so large in terms of its meddling or interference in our lives or in the economy, again it is fair game that citizens should expect something back from governments. It is in that kind of context that I think we should approach the debate this evening.

This is what we in the opposition tried to do in framing the motion. Most motions on opposition days condemn the government for one thing or another. This motion does not do that. It asks:

That this House approves the government taking immediate action to lower interest rates, stimulate production, investment and jobs, strengthen the dollar and lower the rate of inflation.

It is asking the government to do something. It is not condemning it for past sins, although we could easily do that. In the name of common sense and in the name of some urgency, it is asking that the government do something. There is a lot of urgency because of the present economic situation.

I should like to leave the government with some suggestions this evening as to what can be done. Too often we in the opposition are accused of simply criticizing and not offering any suggestions. I should like to make three or four suggestions along the lines of those which have been made already, and I should like to close with some specific suggestions as to what could be done in some of the areas with which I am familiar.

The first one about which I want to talk is the National Energy Program. Many statistics have been bandied about in speeches and in articles in various newspapers across the country. I think it should be obvious from all the statistics—and I do not want to get into them this evening—that the National Energy Program is causing massive problems in the country. If we look at it in terms of the investment it has chased out of the country, it makes no sense whatsoever to discourage Canadians from investing in Canadian industries and in Canadian energy related industries, to discourage foreign investment from coming into the country to invest in our industries, and at the same time to raise interest rates to attract that money back into the country. It does not make any sense to anyone.

Supply

Essentially the same thing is being done with FIRA. We all want to own our country. One of the goals of the National Energy Program is that we have 50 per cent ownership of the energy industry by the year 1990. That is truly a laudable goal with which we all agree. I think we would have to question what Canadian would not agree with Canadians owning 50 per cent of the industry by 1990. FIRA is in somewhat the same category. It wants to encourage ownership of Canadian industry. There is nothing wrong with that, but many people find it hard to live with the fact that FIRA is too discretionary. It is almost akin to making up the rules as one goes along. If FIRA had some firm guidelines or some firm rules at which potential investors could look and know that the government would adhere to them over the life of the investments people were contemplating, FIRA would probably work and work well. Essentially FIRA is a game played, and the rules are made up as the game progresses. This discourages people from investing in Canada.

I am not referring only to big industry. For example, last Friday I had an opportunity to speak with a banker in Brandon. As a matter of fact, he was my banker, so I was all the more interested in talking with him. He pointed out that many small industries—and we were not talking about millions of dollars; we were talking about probably tens or maybe hundreds of thousands of dollars—are affected by FIRA. He said that people have given up applying to FIRA for permission to buy because of the red tape through which they must go. They submit and get a proposal back, they resubmit and get another proposal back. This discourages people from investing in the country. Again, it makes no sense to me—and I do not think it makes sense to many Canadians—that with FIRA and the National Energy Program Canadian dollars are discouraged from staying in the country and investment is discouraged from coming in from the outside, investment which creates jobs in the country. To counter this they raise interest rates, which attracts money back into the country, and we all know what happens when we raise interest rates at home. It hurts business, it hurts Canadian business. Surely the best way to buy out or own our own country is to have a healthy, expanding and vibrant Canadian economy. By raising interest rates people are simply driven out of business. That is no way in which to own our country.

Since I do not have a lot of time, I want to go fairly quickly through the points I want to make this evening. Let us talk about the budget for a minute. The budget is a document which, in effect, discourages production in Canada. We have heard about inflation. A basic definition of inflation is simply too much money pursuing too few goods. I suggest that what the government and what the Bank of Canada has done up to the present time was to emphasize the supply of too much money over too few goods. If the government were serious in addressing Canada's inflationary problem I believe that one of the logical solutions it could pursue would be to study ways to make use of its fiscal policies, which is essentially the taxation policy of the government, as well as using the Bank of Canada