

Borrowing Authority

The improvement of the Trans-Canada Highway through northern Ontario is the most important demand the people of northern Ontario are making. It has been a long-standing desire to have a really first-rate highway there. In the past year, with information that I have made available indicating the support the Government has given to highway construction in Atlantic Canada, in Quebec and more recently on the Yellowhead Highway across the four western provinces, the people of northern Ontario have learned that the Government is supporting highway construction in every province but Ontario.

This seems fine to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie) who is from Newfoundland and shares his constituents' sense of Toronto the golden, a place of prosperity, and thinks that Ontario can take care of itself. Southern Ontario does so in a way that arouses our envy just as much as the envy of citizens of Newfoundland.

We in northern Ontario have one-quarter of the national length of the Trans-Canada Highway. We have in some sections the sole road link between East and West. The Trans-Canada Highway and Highway 11, the northern route from Nipigon eastward, is the vital route for Canadian road transport.

It is our expectation that highway transport will become more and more important in the era of deregulation. We realize that this road is of enormous importance. Trucking traffic will increase on a highway that is 25 years old, a highway which the provincial Department of Transport recognizes as being obsolete in design and width. The highway is barely adequate for highway transport needs and is completely lacking in the tourism needs of northern Ontario, needs which become the tourism possibilities of Canada.

As long as the highway remains the way it is, Canadians as well as Americans will cut across the line and travel the route, which in part is Highway 2 in the northern United States. I suggest that the talk about tourism in northern Ontario will be only rhetoric as long as the highway remains the way it is.

I am pleased to see that the Hon. Member for Sault Ste. Marie, the Solicitor General (Mr. Kelleher), is here in the House this afternoon listening and taking in some of these observations. He knows how important this route is and I trust that he will carry the message to his colleagues in Cabinet by saying: "Even if it is in the context of an election year, when we have to do things that do not make sense by our old standard of deficit reduction, let us get on with this, let us give promises to the Ontario Government, let us get an agreement signed and get building".

Mr. Hawkes: Madam Speaker, what a pleasure it was to hear those parting comments. Finally there has been a public admission of a commonly held attitude: go into an election and bribe the voters with borrowed dollars.

The Hon. Member stood there as if there were no thought that existed in the world other than in an election year, borrow money, bribe the voters. That is not the view of this Party. It was not the view of this Party during the last election campaign and it will not be the view prior to the next election campaign. It is an antiquated set of ideas that is the source of the problems in this country today, the source of 1.5 million unemployed Canadians.

Remember the minority Parliament of 1973 to 1974? Federal government expenses were up 30 per cent a year under the present Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Turner). Expenses were up, there was no income, so the Government borrowed money.

Today we are debating a borrowing authority Bill. We have a Budget that has \$3 billion of surplus revenue over program expenditures except for the interest on the public debt, the interest that came about as a consequence of the marriage between two political Parties in 1972. The attitude was to borrow money, borrow money, pay for it tomorrow, pay for it tomorrow. The money is not here to pay for it. It is not here to pay for programs. We have to borrow more to pay for programs.

The Hon. Member talked about regional disparity. He said that we are doing nothing for Atlantic Canada. Since September of 1984, jobs in Atlantic Canada have grown by an average of 2,000 per month, every month. Month after month, there are more people with permanent jobs. Under the previous Government, the unemployment rate went up by 50 per cent. It has been coming down ever since the voters had the wisdom to change Governments.

• (1610)

The Hon. Member talks about tax credits and whether or not they are important. I have a question for him. We have to borrow money. We could borrow a little less if the NDP would not use taxpayers' dollars through the tax credit system to run election campaigns for their candidates in the Toronto aldermanic race. If they stopped doing that there would be more money in the federal till and less would have to be borrowed.

Recently the NDP put out a letter offering a free trip to Hawaii, Australia and New Zealand. With what? Taxpayers' subsidized dollars. Can the Hon. Member stand in the House and say that the NDP is prepared to make a contribution to reducing the deficit and stop using taxpayers' subsidized dollars to fund aldermanic candidates in Toronto and to provide free trips for lottery winners among those who receive NDP fund-raising letters?

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Madam Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary for his comments and questions. However, I really feel sad, on behalf of the people of Canada, that he missed the whole first half of the speech.