

Borrowing Authority Act

has put forward five constructive suggestions. First, there should be a full-employment strategy. No one would disagree that Canadians should have the right to employment. I defy any sane member of this House to oppose the suggestion that everyone should have an opportunity to share in the wealth of the country. But in addition, they should also have an opportunity to contribute to this country, its basic strength, and its future. What commitment could you have to a nation if you are blocked from sharing in its wealth, if you cannot live in dignity? Basically we need a full employment strategy, and we need it desperately.

We in this country have been very roughly handled by industry. I simply point to that \$2 billion windfall which the energy industry received last week from the government, no strings attached. We have seen many other cash grants and windfalls in which there was the hope for a trickle-down effect, that somehow the benefits would trickle down to those who have nothing. It has not worked in the past and it will not work today. Our suggestion, and I challenge other to criticize it, is that of production agreements in key sectors. If you receive government benefits, if you are a multinational corporation, you do not take the jobs from this country, rather, you create jobs and guarantee employment.

There is a tremendous need for housing in this country, and it is unfortunate that we did not have a little more opportunity for some dialogue with the minister. A tremendous investment at this time in housing would create an enormous number of jobs and meet a tremendous number of social needs. Certainly the minister did something, but it was far short of what was needed. Another point is assistance to exporters. I wish I had time to talk about the tremendous chaos in the forest industry, one of the greatest producers of wealth in this country. This chaos has developed because the government failed to give adequate support to Canadian producers in markets abroad. This should be an extremely high priority because it would create jobs. We produce more than we can consume and it must be exported. With those brief suggestions, I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity of making this presentation.

Mr. Doug Frith (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I have a limited amount of time and I would like to start by taking some time as a relatively new parliamentarian to comment on some of the suggestions made by members of the opposition here this evening. Mr. Speaker, we on this side are quite willing to listen to positive suggestions made by members, regardless of political party. I think we as a government are quite concerned about some of the people who are victims, I suppose, of the present economic situation. Quite frankly, I assumed there would be a much more positive debate here this afternoon on the part of the opposition than what I have actually heard. I refer specifically, I suppose, to the comments of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) this afternoon when he quoted a speech given by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) in Montreal where that gentleman said, in terms of the macroeconomic policies of this government, that the Conservative Party did not much differ with those policies.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Frith: I heard the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre (Mr. Wilson) mention roughly three things. He felt if we were to change some of the NEP, that would solve all the economic ills facing the country today. I would like to remind that hon. member that the NEP does not apply in the U.S., yet we find the oil and gas industry down there finds itself in the same difficulties as the industry in western Canada.

I listened with some interest to the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Corbett) who talked about government advertising. I want to point out to that hon. member that I am sure the responsible minister listened with some interest to some of the cost-saving measures the hon. member suggested. But I also want to point out that the government's budget for this year is \$67 billion, and the hon. member chose to spend about 35 minutes to focus in on that program. He said any money spent on advertising federal government programs is wasted. I would also point out to the hon. member that the alienation in western Canada is not anti-Liberal, it is anti-central government. I would suggest a large part of that has been caused by the inability of the federal government to advertise properly its programs which affect all Canadians across the country.

Admittedly our party has difficulties at the present time because we do not have the representation in Western Canada we would wish, and will have after the next election.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Frith: But I point out that if one looked at some of the material sent to constituents by Members of Parliament representing the Conservative Party in western Canada, one would question whether or not they believe in a federal government or federal state in this nation.

Let me focus on where we are spending part of this \$67 million. For example, the Department of National Health and Welfare anticipates a net increase of \$1.7 billion in expenditures for this budget year. Of that money, \$1.264 billion will go directly to people covered under the Old Age Security Act. That is partially due to an increase in the number of people over 65, and also due to the Liberal government's having a cost of living allowance attached to those benefits. Is the opposition suggesting that we cut out that kind of benefit to the elderly? There will be \$397 million in the form of statutory payments under the Canada Assistance Plan, which we have no control over. Are you suggesting that we cut statutory payments to the provinces? We have an increase of \$249 million in payments to individuals under the Family Allowances Act, which is also indexed. Do I hear from the opposition that that is an area they want to cut?

So what I am suggesting, Mr. Speaker, is that much more could have been done in terms of constructive criticism of this government. I think we are smart enough at least to listen to them if they would only take the time to give us constructive criticism.