

Supply

There is a feeling in British Columbia that something has gone dreadfully wrong. Yet when one looks to the federal Government for leadership, let alone the provincial Government, there appears to be nothing there. It was that situation which encouraged us to put this motion forward for debate today, and I am very pleased to rise on behalf of my Party to make a few opening remarks.

I think it is fair to say that the situation in British Columbia is very serious by almost any indicator. This past year housing starts reached a 20-year low in that province. Retail sales are a good indicator of how things are going and how confident people are about the economy; they have declined in every year over the last four years. I think it is fair to say that the largest single source of income in British Columbia is now welfare. What a condemnation that must be of the political leadership in that part of Canada. Just the other day we received the unemployment statistics for Canada. In every province things were essentially looking up, with two exceptions. Newfoundland is one, and we all appreciate that that province has traditionally been very hard hit. But we also have British Columbia where the situation has gotten worse. Unemployment levels went up in April of this year. It is the only province in Canada where the situation continues to deteriorate. I think it is fair to say that when we mention British Columbia people start to look at you kind of peculiarly, and kind of laugh at what is going on in that part of Canada. The British Columbia Government has turned that province into a laughing stock, and people do not invest in laughing stocks.

Look at the Vancouver stock exchange, Mr. Speaker. The majority of the money being raised on that exchange is for investment outside of the province. What does that tell us about that economy? In parts of British Columbia today unemployment is in the range of 25 per cent to 30 per cent. That is a very serious situation, yet what is the provincial Government doing about it?

The Provincial Government keeps telling us when people ask for support that there is no money for education. There is no money for the school system as we have known it. There is no money for the colleges and universities. They have to take cuts, as do the technical and vocational schools. There is no money for the expansion of hospitals and health care in that province. There is no money for senior citizen housing or child care. There is no money to help the hard pressed food production sector, the farmers and ranchers of British Columbia. There is no assistance for the forest or mining sectors. There is nothing for tourism other than Expo. There is no assistance for the hard-pressed business sector. There is nothing until after Expo in 1986.

● (1530)

As a matter of fact, the other day someone was saying that there is a new "wine" in British Columbia. It is called "We can't do anything until after 1986". We are hearing that repeatedly from every Cabinet Minister and the Premier of that province. However, that is not quite true. They instantly found \$500 million to assist with the debt of B.C. Rail. That

was no problem. Then they needed \$1 billion to develop that north-east coal project. That happened just before the election and many geologists and mining people were wondering if that was a wise move. They had doubts about what the Government was doing. However, the Government insisted that the north-east coal deposit was the big employer, the megaproject, the opium for the people. It cost over \$1 billion to provide infrastructure for the development of the Tumbler Ridge town site. Just a few weeks ago we found out that the mine was dug in the wrong place. The coal was not where the mine was dug. It is going to cost in excess of \$300 million to move the operation to the proper location. We made a \$300 million mistake. We went against the advice of our geologists.

The Government is pumping hundreds of millions of dollars into Expo, yet there is nothing for child care or senior citizen housing. There is nothing to help college and university students. There are cut-backs on loans and increasing tuition fees. However, for Expo there is all kinds of money.

There are some peculiar things in relation to Expo as well, Mr. Speaker. We needed some trees to beautify the Expo site. They said they could not find any trees in British Columbia. They had to import trees from the United States to British Columbia. That is like saying you have to import sand into the Sudan. It is ridiculous that British Columbia could not provide trees for its own Expo site.

One could go on and on with a vast list of examples of how the Government has provided absolutely no leadership. Any leadership it has provided is laughable and despicable. It is a slap in the face of British Columbians that these people are supposed to be providing economic and social leadership in that province.

If one went downtown in Vancouver, Nelson, Trail, Kelowna, Prince George or Prince Rupert and asked people where the province is going over the next 10 years, they would tell you that it is going down. There is no sense of vision, strategy, or a plan for the future. Everyone is fumbling and stumbling over themselves as the critical fishing, mining and forest sectors of our economy cry out for support, direction and assistance. They are simply turned down. The Government walks away as it continues its scorched earth policy in British Columbia.

I do not want to continue to talk about the lack of political and economic leadership in British Columbia. It becomes distressful after awhile. The most distressful aspect is that Cabinet Ministers and the Premier in British Columbia are still suggesting that the most important resource in that province is timber or copper or coal or fish. The most important resource in that province is the people. To cut back on educational funding is an improper way to treat the people of British Columbia.

Mr. Siddon: Don't get so angry, Nelson.

Mr. Riis: The Member for Richmond-South Delta (Mr. Siddon) says "Don't get so angry, Nelson". That is probably fair advice. However, Mr. Speaker, there is no other emotion left with which one can react to the serious, dreadful, and