

Borrowing Authority

to vote for increased borrowing, in the face of this lack of determination to cut out waste I urge every Member of this House to stand when the moment comes and deny the Government the borrowing opportunity it seeks.

● (1230)

Mr. Jim Peterson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Economic Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, in this Bill we are addressing one aspect of an economic package. Let us be clear; the economy in Canada is not where we want to see it today. We have not yet had that resurgence of consumer confidence which so many have told us is the key to economic recovery.

Let me point out that this borrowing authority is necessary in these weak economic times because it is critical that there be stimulus from the public sector. I have not heard any concrete alternatives proposed by the Opposition. The Opposition has talked about cutting back on Government waste. We are all in favour of that.

Mr. Huntington: Why don't you do something about it, then?

Mr. Peterson: I would like to see the Opposition come to us with its list. There are like-minded people on all sides of this House who are prepared to get away from useless expenditures and see that money is directed toward job creation. But with what specifics has the Opposition come forward? There has been absolutely none, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Thacker: Name yours.

Mr. Peterson: Until the Opposition is prepared to come forth with concrete alternatives, I do not feel its Members have the credibility to stand up and say: "There is waste, and therefore we will not vote for this Bill". Let the Opposition come forth with concrete alternatives.

Mr. Thacker: We have.

Mr. Peterson: I have some ideas I would like to try on Members in this House. First, consumer confidence is critical.

Mr. Shields: There is none.

Mr. Peterson: I think there are signs of a turn-around. We cannot guarantee that this economy will turn around. Many people think that the secret of our economic recovery is based on what will happen in the United States. Yes, a turn-around there will be helpful. Does that mean that we as Canadians should not attempt to be better in our own country? Does this mean that we should not attempt to be more competitive and that we should not endeavour, each one of us, to bring to our jobs and daily tasks a new-found attitude of commitment and desire to be better? We can do that. That is something the Government cannot legislate. It is something that we have to do as Canadians.

I believe we could be doing something to help restore consumer confidence. We have many excellent manufacturers in this country, people who make good products, products

which when given the right boost by our consumer markets could take off and become world leaders. The Science Council of Canada identified 200 threshold firms who were on the verge of take-off and have developed a competitive edge and demonstrated excellence in their production. We could be giving these firms an added lift if all Canadians as individuals were to engage in a "Buy or shop Canadian" program. Canadians could say to themselves: "In the past we have been looking to foreign producers to give us the goods we want to buy; could we not find those same goods in Canada?"

Let me refer to farm products. Our farms are highly mechanized and competitive. Some of the most competitive and productive industries in Canada are our primary industries, bar none in the world. Canadians should be looking to Canadian produce. Why do we always have to have fresh foods imported at high cost during the winter months from foreign countries? Why should we not support our own primary manufacturers to a far greater extent?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peterson: Why should we as consumers not say: "Yes, we have preserved that old car and the old car has seen better days but let us take a look now at cars produced in Canada by Canadian workers". Many automobile producers in Canada have demonstrated that they can downsize models, be competitive and produce cars which consume less fuel and others that run on natural gas and propane. Why cannot Canadian consumers say: "We are going to take a fresh look at what the North American producers have been doing and what our workers have been building in our own plants in Canada"? These decisions consumers can make and they are important.

One of my colleagues talked about the lack of incentive for infrastructure production. Where was he when we were talking about the NEED Program that we have brought in, encouraging municipalities to come forth with infrastructure projects which will contribute to the long-run productivity of Canada? More important, it will be producing more jobs in the short run for the people who need them most. Here is a directed program. Has the Opposition come up with a better program for creating jobs? It is not perfect, of course, but have we heard better alternatives from the other side?

Mr. Huntington: You are the Government.

Mr. Peterson: Until the Opposition comes up with a better program, let the Opposition look to the infrastructure projects that we are prepared to create with our NEED Program.

I believe there are other areas where we could take advantage of our great strengths. Our service sector in Canada is without parallel in the world. Our financial institutions, our lawyers, our insurance companies and our accountants have a collective reputation unmatched by any other country in the world.

Mr. Thacker: That does not hold for the Government.