

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 22, 1984

The House met at 11 a.m.

● (1110)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 62—TOURIST INDUSTRY

Mr. Speaker: Before putting the motion in the name of the Hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Jelinek), since today is the final allotted day, the House will go through the usual procedures to consider and dispose of Supply Bills. In view of recent practices, do Hon. Members agree that the Supply Bills be distributed now?

I should caution the House that the Supply Bill which is in order for presentation does not reflect the decision of the Chair at six o'clock last night to eliminate one item. Therefore, the Bill which would be distributed would be for the information of Hon. Members. The Bill actually introduced at the appropriate time would be amended accordingly. Is there unanimous consent to have the Bills distributed at this point with the proviso I have indicated?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton) moved:

That this House condemns the Government for having allowed Canada's tourism deficit to reach a staggering \$2.1 billion in 1983, and having thus caused over 100,000 Canadian jobs to be lost in that year alone, and for failing to remedy the overtaxation which is the underlying problem which plagues this labour-intensive industry and which pushes prices to non-competitive levels thereby counteracting any positive impact that might be generated by the Government's marketing expenditures.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this Party is presenting this Opposition Day motion today on tourism for a variety of obvious reasons. Less than a year ago, April 14 of last year, the Progressive Conservative Party had an Opposition Day on tourism headed by the Hon. Member for Malpeque (Mr. Gass) to try to impress upon the Government the great importance of this sector to the Canadian economy. It is nearly a full year since that Opposition Day, Mr. Speaker, and the Government has yet to touch the root of the problem. In fact, the deficit, as the motion points out, has skyrocketed to a staggering \$2.1 billion, resulting in over 100,000 Canadian jobs being lost in 1983 alone.

I will just very quickly review the importance of the tourist industry and the complete lack of regard by the Liberal

administration for the major problems facing that industry today. In dollar terms, Mr. Speaker, tourism and travel are worth \$17 billion each year in Canada which accounts for roughly 5 per cent of the GNP. Travel and tourism employs over one million Canadians.

In these days of such high levels of unemployment, surely the Government should be putting a lot more emphasis on the tourist industry if for no other reason than the potential employment which exists in this sector. Jobs are being lost every day in this industry as the Government continues to take no action. Visitors from abroad last year spent as much as \$3.9 billion, making tourism one of the biggest earners of foreign exchange in this country. According to the Canadian Government office of tourism, this industry has a higher employment multiplier than any of the 40 leading industries of our nation.

I could expand on the tremendous importance of tourism to this country, but because of time limitations, Mr. Speaker, I will just say very briefly that the travel industry in Canada is not living up to its potential. In fact, tourism in this country is an industry under siege. The Liberal Government cannot blame international conditions in this regard as it has in other matters, because on the international market Canada's share of world tourism fell from 4.6 per cent in 1972 to a dismal 2.7 per cent in 1981. In other words, in that decade we lost half of our share of tourism in the world market.

Why is it that tourism in Canada is decreasing while at the same time it is increasing in other countries? I repeat and underline the fact that the Liberal administration cannot blame international market forces in this regard.

● (1115)

There are nearly 100,000 more Canadians outside Canada every night of the year than there are foreigners in Canada, and the travel account deficit grows at over \$3 million per day. This does not include the travel deficit with the U.S., because there are 74,000 more Canadians in the U.S. every night of the year than there are Americans in Canada. The deficit there grows by nearly \$2 million a day. That is a total of over \$5 million a day, representing a staggering figure of \$2.1 billion last year and growing. That is unacceptable yet the Government is not acting.

Some want to blame the problem on our winters. I have news for them, Mr. Speaker. Last July, when the Canadian market should be at its strongest, travel to the U.S. was up by 37.3 per cent over the previous year. That throws that argument out the window because Canadians are travelling abroad in the summer just as much as in the winter. But the winter months can be taken advantage of. Canadians go skiing in Switzerland, Austria, Italy and to Aspen, Colorado. We could