

Borrowing Authority

councils, chambers of commerce, business and professional groups, church groups, specific unions, community groups and ethnic organizations, service clubs, special interest groups, and a variety of businesses and different individuals have taken time over the last number of days to communicate to a Member of Parliament a simple question to be raised in the House. This is from a community which is experiencing unemployment levels of nearly 30 per cent as defined by Statistics Canada. The question is: What indication is Government giving to justify borrowing \$19 billion?

With some reluctance, Mr. Speaker, I have had to respond to each and every inquiry that I do not know. Members of Parliament are unable at this time to determine the Government's priorities when it comes to spending \$19 billion. I know the Minister, when he introduced this request some days ago, suggested that we simply have to wait until the Estimates are tabled and then there will be a very clear indication what the priorities and goals of this Government are. Well, I have looked through those Estimates. I discussed them with a number of my colleagues and it is difficult to say, looking at that information, just what the specific goals and objectives of the Government are. Are they to work towards a full employment option? Are they to work towards higher productivity in Canada? Are they to restrain or stimulate the economy? Are they to move more towards the process of Canadianization? One can list a whole number of questions. Yet looking at the Estimates, Mr. Speaker, it is unclear what the Government's priorities are.

Another question usually raised is: What is the Government trying to do? Is it trying to assist us in some direct way? One can lay out the list of job-creation programs which the Hon. Member for Cariboo-Chilcotin mentioned in his remarks, the alphabet soup of LIPs and FLIPs and BLIPs and NEEDs, a whole list of things that the Government has in place designed to create jobs. But we as Members of Parliament know that that is by and large an ad hoc approach, a band-aid approach. They do put a handful of people to work for a short period of time, hopefully to allow certain people to requalify for UI benefits; but by and large, if we are talking about thousands out of work in a particular region, we are creating jobs for a few hundred and obviously it is not solving the problem.

What frustrates people, Mr. Speaker, is when they read on a regular basis about the millions of dollars going to assist certain firms in bail-outs, or assisting certain firms to reorganize their financial affairs. I am not talking about millions of dollars or tens of millions of dollars; in many cases we are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars which go to a single firm. Dome Petroleum, Chrysler and Massey-Ferguson spring to mind. I could go on because there is a whole variety of firms receiving hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to assist them in restructuring their financial obligations so that they can continue in business.

Small businesses and farmers and ranchers, and I suspect fishermen in other parts of Canada, are asking why it is they get no assistance, absolutely nothing, other than being possibly eligible for some of these simplistic make-work programs with

all the red tape and hassle and so on that the previous speaker mentioned. Is this what we get? Why do we not get these other forms of assistance? Then, Mr. Speaker, they begin to get very cynical when they see certain businesses collapsing, such as in the forest industry, with thousands of jobs lost, which jobs will not return as the result of restructuring going on in that sector. Then they hear that a certain industry in central Canada will be getting a bail-out to enable thousands of jobs to remain in place. They will get financial assistance to shore up that industry to enable them to continue. That is fine, Mr. Speaker, but the point is that if they are going to do it for one industry, one sector in one region of Canada, what about the other parts of Canada? What about industries in other parts of Canada which some of us would argue get very little assistance? In some cases they get absolutely no assistance at all.

We have been listening to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) saying: "Just wait until the Estimates come out and then you will understand what is going on"; or more recently he is saying the budget will soon be coming down, perhaps in March, maybe April, and then we will get an idea of how the Government plans to spend the \$19 billion. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is asking a great deal of the people of Canada, remembering this was the Government whose leader back in 1980, in Toronto, said this Party will not stand by and let the recession come. Unfortunately, he meant it. The Government did a whole number of things to ensure that the recession came, faster and bigger than perhaps it normally would.

This is the same Government that says yes, we have an industrial strategy in this country. It is called dependency on the oil industry. We have identified the petroleum industry as the goose and the revenue coming from that industry is the golden egg. That was our strategy, our economic saviour. That was what we were going to depend on for economic recovery in this country. When the Government reached into the nest and lifted up the goose to get at the golden egg, what it found was not an egg. It found other material and the whole thing collapsed. The one strategy in place collapsed because of the assumption that energy prices were going to continue to increase forever.

Mr. Corbett: What did they find?

Mr. Riis: What did they find? I will leave that up to one's imagination.

This is the same Government, Mr. Speaker, which says: "Have faith in us and the upcoming budget". This is the same Government which created a situation in Canada where people went to sleep one night and when they woke up the next morning they could easily have thought they were in Poland. Workers in the public sector across the country found that some of their basic rights had been dropped stripped away. They found that the basic right of free collective bargaining was no more. This is the Government that time and time again has told us that Liberals are good for us. Hon. Members opposite say that their policies are good for Canadians, but that is like saying that bush fires and floods in Australia are