

● (1710)

If the Government were to look at providing a real stimulus to housing construction in this country, even as a job-creation measure, it would go a long way toward alleviating the terrible unemployment that exists. It has been proven by government figures which are available that for every one job that is created in housing construction, another four jobs are created in spin-off industries, such as electrical manufacturing, the plumbing industry and the oil industry. Any industry one could think of would be affected by a substantial increase in the amount of subsidies that we would be prepared to give for housing construction. If the Government were going to put the money it is asking for to that type of use, I think we would be less reluctant to provide it.

Another area to which we believe the Government should pay more attention is the needs of senior citizens in this country. The Government consistently tells us that it recognizes the problems facing the seniors of this country and has studied them. In fact, it has studied the problem to death. However, it says that until the economy improves it cannot do anything for the senior citizens of the country. In its last Budget it provided pensioners with \$25 in June and \$25 in December in the hopes that the problem would go away. The problem will only go away to a small degree for single elderly persons who are already living below the poverty line.

There is absolutely no reason why the Government could not have increased their pensions immediately by \$50 a month as of January 1, 1984. Instead of doing that, its Budget increased the tax giveaways to those who do not need it, the large corporations and the wealthy in this country. If the Government could do that for that segment of the population, there is absolutely no reason why it could not have done so for single elderly women over the age of 65 who have incomes that are well below the poverty line. They are the ones most in need in this country.

The Government could use some of the \$29.5 billion it is seeking to do something about the thousands of disabled and handicapped people across the country who are unable to work because of their disability or discrimination in the work-place, and provide them with decent incomes on a monthly basis. However, it chooses not to do that because the economy is in difficulty and the Government says it does not have the tax revenue to provide those people with the means to follow a decent lifestyle in the mainstream of Canadian society.

The other area in which the Government could have taken serious action if it had been well intentioned is the unemployed in this country. The problem of unemployment was hardly dealt with in the Budget. In fact, it did not even make a dent in that massive problem which faces our country. In my opinion it is a national disgrace that the over-all unemployment rate in this country is in excess of 11 per cent. It is a further disgrace that the Government refuses to do anything meaningful about it.

Youth unemployment in Canada is in excess of 18 per cent. These are the very people in our country who are our most valuable resource. The Government is allowing them to waste

Borrowing Authority Act

away without providing them with any meaningful employment programs. It goes even one step further by attacking the post-secondary system in the country through further reductions in funding to support these educational facilities. This affects research and development capability in Canada and the accessibility of young people to these institutions. If the Government seriously considered putting the amount of money for which it is asking into meaningful, useful, productive and socially beneficial programs, then we may have a change of heart and perhaps would be willing to consider providing that amount of money.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I cannot resist making a few comments on this borrowing authority the Government wants to shove down our throats and down the throats of all Canadians. Considering the deplorable performance of this Government's administration, Mr. Speaker, once again, it is very difficult for us to approve, on behalf of the Canadian people, what the Government is proposing to do, especially in view of the shocking circumstance that the Government is asking for a borrowing authority which exceeds its needs by four billion dollars. I think it would be in order to ask the Government very seriously why it wants the House to support this request for four additional billion dollars.

It is really very difficult to give a positive response. It would seem that the Government—and of course it is not going to say this to Canadians—first has to correct its mistakes, the results of its administrative incompetence. That is one of the reasons why it is coming back to the House for the seventh or eighth time with a Borrowing Authority Bill.

Mr. Speaker, they are adding insult to injury by asking for more than they need. Are we to understand that this Government is incapable of telling us exactly what its needs are? It is true that its previous forecasts were so erroneous that today they are downright embarrassing, and the Government is certainly doing its best not to emphasize this request for borrowing authority, even if it does involve four billion dollars it will not be needing at first. But this is very serious! I wonder how long they think the Canadian public will trust them when they are incapable of telling us exactly why they need this borrowing authority.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker. We all know that an election campaign is imminent. Why does the Government want a borrowing authority of \$29 billion, when according to assessments that are not necessarily reliable, its needs do not exceed \$25 billion? Four billion dollars for the Government, give or take a few dollars, I know that may seem insignificant to our administrators. Canadians listening to us, however, know perfectly well that in this day and age, considering the interest rate and debt costs, four billion dollars is a lot of money!

What is the Government hiding in its request to the House today? Is it perhaps preparing for the next election campaign and planning to make promises without end to win the support