

Taxation

minister has not had too much success in twisting the arms of the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) to get additional funds. Farmers are supposed to be able to qualify in certain circumstances for special farm credit rates. I believe these rates are 11.75 per cent. I believe the going rate for the Farm Credit Corporation is 16.75 per cent. But this farmer has not received approval for his loan. As a last resort he telephoned me this morning and told me that he had been in touch with the Federal Business Development Bank. The bank is looking at a loan for him in the amount of \$230,000. I hope he gets it. But the interest rate for this loan is 21 per cent, which is the current rate at the Federal Business Development Bank.

Surely there are some ways we can assist people. The government is borrowing \$6 billion. If there was some way whereby the government could subsidize interest rates for the farmers and businessmen, those of us in the opposition and in other parts of the House would probably say that the government has a good plan. I am sure members would say, "Certainly you deserve this additional money." But there is nothing like that in the offing. The government has stood firm that interest rates must remain high in order to bring down inflation and, whether we like it or not, it will remain that way come hell or high water.

Another thing comes to mind. This additional money the government is borrowing could be used to help those women in need who are between the ages of 60 and 65. I have mentioned this on several occasions. I know it is one of the burning ambitions of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I suppose it is discrimination, but women between the ages of 60 and 65 in many cases are the ones who are most destitute. They are in an age bracket which prevents them from getting a job. Many would not be physically able to take on a job for which they may be qualified. These women are living in absolute poverty, many of them too proud to apply for welfare. I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, and members from all sides of the House are aware that there are women in these particular circumstances. A good many of them are on welfare. I have pleaded with the government about this. I am sure that a great majority of members from all sides of the House feel this is one area where the government should spend a little more money. The government should use some of its borrowed money. It is not a case of spending the whole amount. If those women were made eligible at age 60—of course there are men who are in just as difficult circumstances, but to me women have a much harder job to survive—they would qualify for old age pension, the general assistance subsidy and of course provincial gains and could live in reasonable security and comfort from the age of 60 to 65. The only ones who qualify at present are the spouses of husbands or wives who are drawing old age pension. Also it should be emphasized to the government that a good many are receiving welfare. These funds are provided by the federal government and the provincial government on a cost-sharing basis. It would not be a case of the Federal government having to fund the entire amount.

• (1620)

The government should give immediate attention to this matter. I am sure it would have the endorsement of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin). In fact, I see many distinguished members across the way nodding their heads in agreement. I say to the Minister of Finance and those on the treasury benches that when they obtain this \$6.6 billion, they should ensure it is spent in a manner which will improve the economy and the lot of citizens who are almost destitute.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Lincoln): Mr. Speaker, it was my good fortune to listen earlier to the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) in full flight. I must say to those of us who believe that the House is a house of debate that he is a very welcome addition. If he were still in his seat, I would remind him, however, that the New Democratic Party does not have a monopoly on concern for the unfortunate or the underprivileged.

Mr. Darling: Right on.

Mr. Mackasey: The hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Darling) made that point when he drew to our attention the unfortunate circumstances of many people between the ages of 60 and 65.

This is a bill to grant the government the authority to borrow a considerable sum of money. My first impression was to debate in the style I enjoy as a member of the House, but having listened to the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain and my close friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka, I could not help but think of the strains on society at this particular moment in Canadian history. The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain referred to the depression years. Some of us, not many of us, remember the hungry thirties. I know I do. As a youngster, more by accident than by good fortune, I lived in a family which was not particularly bothered by the recession or the depression. But almost half a century later I can still recall people knocking on doors and asking for charity. This is the word they used to say. They asked for food, for a nickel, a dime or a quarter to survive in the thirties. It was pathetic, it left a deep impression on me. I remember the hunger camps in Val Cartier, men from broken homes, people who had to find solace in each other's company and people who had to depend upon handouts to survive. Whenever I found myself becoming too comfortable in my office as minister of labour, I used to read or reread a book, which should be required reading for Members of Parliament, entitled, "Ten Lost Years, 1929-39". It was a very graphic description of the hungry thirties, particularly how the west and the maritimes were affected.

The other night I was asked by a university group for my views on the success of the Liberal Party of Canada as measured—and I do not want to be controversial—by its years in office. I think it is because we have been able to fashion an economic system which reflects our view and that of the Conservative Party of free enterprise, unlike the socialists. At the same time it also reflects the concern of the Liberal Party