

Mr. Simmons: Seasonal construction activity is at an all-time low.

Mr. Oberle: Whose fault is that?

Mr. Simmons: The hon. gentleman asks whose fault that is. I can tell the Hon. Member. The unemployment rate in Newfoundland right now is 20 per cent, twice the national average, because we have in power in Newfoundland a Tory Government which would rather rail and rant, go to the super bowl games, and blame the federal Government, than to get on with the job it was elected to do, that is, to govern. Newfoundland has not had a day, an hour, or five minutes of provincial Government in the last four years or five years. It has had lots of speechifying, lots of oratory and lots of pointing the finger elsewhere. While it fiddles, Rome burns. While it engages in a continuing distraction, people are unemployed. That is whose fault it is, if the Hon. Member wants to know. We could not stand by and just point a finger and blame it all on some other people. We could not stand by and allow people in those communities to just go on welfare, so we provided what the Tories call some "porkbarrelling", what the Tories call "something sinister and sleazy", and what I call a very sensible use of public money, that is, providing slipway and wharf facilities for fishermen, providing improved facilities for farmers, and providing improved infrastructure in terms of water systems and community halls and arenas. That is what we have been doing with the money and what we will continue to do.

I believe it was the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) who earlier in the debate talked about this \$300 million slush fund, as he called it. What are we doing with this slush fund, Mr. Speaker? I have just told you the kinds of things which are being done in my riding of Burin-St. George's. How about elsewhere across the country? How about in Kingston and the Islands where we have a good project which the hon. lady herself lobbied for and supported? How about Rosedale in Toronto? I am sure that people watching Question Period this afternoon saw the contradiction in the Tory questioning. In one mouthful they were charging that all the money had been spent in Liberal ridings, and in the next mouthful, the Hon. Member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie) was on his feet complaining that some money was spent in his riding without his knowledge. We cannot take responsibility for the fact that the Tories sometimes do not do their homework. We cannot take the responsibility if they are not in touch with groups in their own ridings. If groups in their ridings have to come to Liberal Members of Parliament to get action, we cannot exactly be blamed for that. Should the Hon. Member for York South-Weston (Mrs. Appolloni) have washed her hands of it and said no to these people? Or should she have done what I believe is her duty to do as an Hon. Member of this House, that is, see to it that people, whether in her riding or elsewhere across this country, have access to information about government programs. Her sin is that she did her job. The sin of the Hon. Member for Rosedale is that instead of doing his homework and keeping in touch with community groups in his riding, he comes into this House and tries

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to smear someone else for doing what he should have done in the first place.

Where else are we spending this money? I know that some of the ridings in Quebec are Liberal. I am told that is the case. However, I hear talk of one riding called Joliette and I am told that Joliette, at the moment at least, does not have a Liberal Member of Parliament. Yet, I hear, Mr. Speaker, that one project in that riding of Joliette, represented by a good Tory in this House, received \$400,000 out of this so-called slush fund. I must admit that in the case of Joliette we do have a motive. We do have a hidden agenda, a broadly based political motive, in seeing to it that some money flows into that riding. We want to see the Hon. Member for Joliette (Mr. LaSalle) back here. We cannot bear the thought of having a House with no Tories from Quebec. Since their leadership convention, eight full months, the Tories have been trying to find a riding in Quebec safe enough for the temporary Hon. Member for Central Nova. That has been their preoccupation for eight months. They do a poll, they do not like it, so they do a poll on the poll. One of these days, Mr. Speaker, they will find one they think is safe enough.

● (1700)

Mr. Oberle: Have you tried one in B.C. lately, or Alberta?

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, there is no slush fund. There is no slush fund!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Oberle: Louder.

Mr. Simmons: There is no slush fund. By George, I think they have got it. There is no slush fund. This is just one of our latest efforts to help some people who are unemployed. Some of the people we are helping moved from Schefferville. They are down in my riding now and they have jobs, thanks to those programs. That is what we are doing with this so-called slush fund. What, then, Mr. Speaker, are the criteria for this fund? One—

Mr. Oberle: You have to be Liberal.

Mr. Simmons: One, the need for some jobs. Two, the availability of projects. These are two criteria. He says there is a third one: you have to be a Liberal. It so happens there are a lot of Liberals out there and a lot of them are administering those projects. There are a lot of Tories administering some of those projects as well as some NDP, and working on them too. The criteria are a need for jobs and the availability of some sensible projects.

The gentleman from Prince George-Peace River calls for rekindling the entrepreneurial spirit. I have news for him: we got there before him. We are rekindling that spirit. There is growth in the economy. You can ignore all the economic indicators you want to, but that will not make them go away. They clearly show that we have bottomed out. Despite all the gloom and doom from the Tories who wish everything would go wrong, such is not the case. We are providing these job