

Employment Tax Credit Act

Mr. Oberle: Yes, I did. Mr. Speaker underlined what I have said. I know this particular language could be offensive to some people. It did not originate on this side of the House. It originated on the other side of the House in the context of the Quebec referendum and the Parti Québécois. Mr. Lévesque was accused of being intellectually dishonest. What I was saying was that he is no more intellectually dishonest than these fellows, because I look at the Quebec referendum in this way: there is a fellow whose term and mandate as a premier are running out. He knows that he cannot ask the real question, Yes or No. He knows, as everyone in the House knows, that it would fail because only 18 per cent in the province of Quebec, and some of those who are on the lunatic fringe, would want to leave this country. He cannot ask the question, Yes or No. But he promised that there would be a referendum, and he must fulfil this promise if he wants to be elected once more. So, he is buying time with this sovereignty-association consultation business. These fellows have accused him of intellectual dishonesty.

I want to take us back to December when they defeated the government. They said that interest rates must go down. That is what the finance critic over there said. He said it three or four times—interest rates must go down.

Mr. Collenette: They are going down.

Mr. Oberle: He would slump over in his chair and say that they must go down, that there were all these things that had to be done right away. In British Columbia the other day I had a fellow ask me, "Do you know why we are in such tough shape in the country? It is the backlash of the Conservative government." Can you imagine? If one wanted to apply the term of intellectual dishonesty, that would have to be it.

These fellows had to get back into power, so they promised low interest rates, housing, cheaper energy, and everything one would want. Now they are back in power, and what do we get? We get a bill called the employment tax credit. It is a bill that has been in effect since 1978. We are adding to it a little bit now. We are extending it a bit. We are raising the ante a bit. Then there was the Small Businesses Loans Act. We raised that from \$75,000 to \$100,000. That does not catch up with inflation, but we are doing things.

The Minister of State for Mines (Mrs. Erola) was telling us how this particular measure has helped small business in the country. Well, it is really laughable. I want to tell Mr. Speaker that there are Canadians throughout the land who are looking at the budget of December 13, and they are looking at it very closely. I can assure the House that it is our intention to remind them as often as we can of what our intention was, what we would have done with the economy in the first five-year period and over the longer term. We would have restored the confidence the people once had in our ability to produce and in our ability to do things.

Going back to forestry, in that short six-month period we got together for the first time with the provinces and once again worked out a national forest policy. Let me quote from the policy a little bit, and let me in fairness say something nice

about the minister. I see him in the House tonight, the minister of the environment who has part-time responsibility for forestry. He was asked recently by the Pulp and Paper Association, which had its convention in Montreal, to make a luncheon speech. I must congratulate him on the contribution he made in respect of policy and to the discussions that took place.

● (2100)

The minister responsible for forestry when our party was in power, and the resource ministers of the provinces, entered into a commitment which the minister underlined and to which he paid tribute. He committed himself pretty well to following the trend that had been worked out and established, and I compliment him for that.

When I asked the minister in the House a couple of weeks ago whether he would take the important step of appointing an assistant deputy minister, he said that would happen within days. Some days have expired and he is nodding his head, so I assume he will probably do that tomorrow morning at eight o'clock. When he does, he will have my support. He and his department will continue to have my input and suggestions.

Let me review some of that policy, sir. The new federal policy was based on the concept that the forest sector is of vital importance to our country's economic, social and environmental well-being. Our rich endowment of natural resources has supported our rise as an industrial power and, to a major degree, it still supports our continued economic prosperity.

The forest policy also recognizes, of course, the right to ownership of the resources by the provinces. That is an important factor the minister will have to address himself to, because some of his colleagues do not share that view when it comes to oil and some other natural resources. The policy we have worked out very much respected the ownership of the resources in the right of the provinces and their right to manage them initially. The federal policy must, therefore, be based on the advice of provincial resource ministers.

It was the intention of the policy to provide continued support for the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers as the key to the evolution of a well co-ordinated and cohesive national forest policy. I am sure the minister will carry out that commitment and that it will provide no problems.

The Conservative government was committed to producing taxation schemes which would provide a climate for greater private sector and provincial government investment in intensive forest management.

In that context, sir, may I say that there is one company in the United States, namely, the Weyerhaeuser Company, which spends more money on research and development and forest renewal than is spent by the entire Canadian forest service. Can you imagine that? That is mind boggling, but it is the fact. In fact the expenditures in the Canadian forest service in real dollars today are only 50 per cent of what they were ten years ago. It is time for rethinking on that side on how we can