

Supply

unemployment in the name of some other economic goal.

We are not going to solve our fiscal problems until we are committed to solving them, not through the current kind of policies that the government is following but through the creation of employment.

That is why we brought forward a jobs plan. That is why we have agreed with so many others across this country who have called for a municipal infrastructure program to get Canadians working, building and doing the kinds of things that we need for our future.

• (1915)

It is not a question of spending so much as it is a question of investment in Canada's future. That would be money spent wisely and it would be money spent in a way that would enable these Canadians who are actually a drain on the public treasury to become once again a boon to the public treasury.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a great pleasure for me to rise in this House today to put a question to my hon. friend and colleague, the member for Winnipeg Transcona. On the last supply day of this current session we are dealing with a figure somewhere in the realm of \$161 billion. We are looking at a country in crisis. We are particularly looking at a crisis in the provinces and the municipalities of this country because of the way in which this debt has been off-loaded by this government on to provincial and municipal governments.

I know that my hon. friend from Winnipeg Transcona has great sympathy for provincial governments, and probably in particular for those governments in Ontario, which Heaven knows needs our sympathy, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. It has been advocated today by numerous members of the Liberal Party who have spoken in this debate that a tri-level conference of federal, provincial and municipal governments be convened to deal with a number of the problems that this off-loading of the debt has created.

I would consequently ask my hon. colleague from Winnipeg Transcona if he and his party would agree with this idea as it is one measure with which to clarify, deal with and receive the contribution from those various levels of government. Some people have merely agreed upon provincial input but, coming as I do from Atlantic

Canada, we are prepared to say, shocking as it may be to some, that the questions that arise from the problems of Toronto with over two million people are at least as important as those that arise in Prince Edward Island with approximately 125,000 people. I would ask for the hon. member's comments on this suggestion by the Liberal Party.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not see any harm and I can see a lot of potential merit in the idea of having such a conference. However it would have to be a conference that was attended by the federal government with an open mind because part of the problem is that they are not short of representations made to them in the past and just recently by provincial governments and municipalities. It is a good idea but it may be that this government has passed the point where it will listen.

The municipalities have repeatedly called for spending on the municipal infrastructure in this country. I met with the Union of Manitoba Municipalities and it has all kinds of things that need to be done and that money could be spent on.

The government is fond of saying that people could not run a household like it runs the government. That may be true but the fact is that it often misrepresents how it is running the government.

When we add up our monthly finances we do not lump our 25-year mortgage into what we owe for the month of January because we make distinctions between money that is borrowed for long-term purposes and will come back to us in the form of assets and future benefits and money that is just spent for immediate purposes. One of the distinctions this government seems unable to make is the difference between those two kinds of moneys. It is a distinction that the municipalities in particular have been able to make.

I think all provincial governments are in a bind, not just the ones governed by New Democrats. The fact is that the provincial governments do find themselves in a situation that is quite different from the federal government because the provincial governments do not control fiscal and monetary policy. The provincial governments do not theoretically control the Bank of Canada. The provincial governments do not have the ability to initiate new tax measures as the federal government does. If they do initiate some new tax measures often the effects of these are vitiated by the fact that a neighbouring