

Borrowing Authority

I would like to go into that for a moment because it was the defence critic of the New Democratic Party who made those remarks about the proposed closure of CFB Summerside in Prince Edward Island.

• (1240)

I would like to put a few facts on the record. First, Summerside has been under threat of closure for a decade, that I am aware of. There have been units transferred to Summerside from other bases, from Shearwater, in the constituency of Dartmouth, from Greenwood in the constituency of Annapolis Valley, to keep CFB Summerside viable.

As the defence critic well knows, the aircraft at CFB Summerside have become virtually obsolete. It would cost \$300 million to retrofit the fleet of aircraft. Some of those aircraft which he says are useful surveillance can only stay in the air for two hours. It takes less than that to fly from Halifax to Ottawa in the normal course of events in a commercial aircraft. There are very few of those aircraft that can remain in the air long enough to do any useful surveillance. I am sure that the defence critic of the New Democratic Party knows that. But does he come to this House and say: "Spend \$300 million retrofitting the obsolete tracker aircraft." No, Mr. Speaker, he just comes to criticize the Government for taking what are clearly essential and necessary measures in order to ensure the viability of our national defence force.

Let me speak for a moment about the situation in Summerside, Prince Edward Island. I am sure all Members have the greatest sympathy for the officials of that town and for the people of the area, but the question is, can we use our national defence facilities to provide economic support to an area of the country? Is that the purpose of our national defence initiative? I think everybody has to answer very clearly, no. That is not the purpose of our national defence force to simply provide economic capacity to an area or particular part of the country.

The solution to the problem in Summerside lies in other programs that might benefit people of the area and lead to economic development and overcome the adversity that will be placed on the people in the area as a result of the closing of CFB Summerside. While I think that we should exercise great sympathy for the people of

that area, there are a few facts that are important to the consideration of their plight.

For instance, there was an article in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* recently that referred to the \$186 million windfall that Atlantic provinces have experienced as a result of the equalization program, that is payments from the Government of Canada. Do you know what those payments allow in the case of the Province of Prince Edward Island? The province had projected a budgetary deficit of \$13.2 million. As a result of increases in the equalization payments, it received \$14 million that wiped out the budgetary deficit of the Province of Prince Edward Island. Prince Edward Island now has a balanced budget.

The Government that I represent in this House of Commons has a budgetary deficit of \$30 billion and 34 cents of all the dollars that we receive have to go to service that budget deficit. One might say: "Who has the better financial position to react to a difficult situation?" The point is that the Government of Prince Edward Island as a result of equalization payments is not without financial capability.

I think we should reflect also on some of the decisions that that Government has made in the past decade and particularly, the current premier of the province who is personally involved in the making of these decisions.

First, Prince Edward Island refused to take cheap power from the Province of New Brunswick and elected instead to utilize power that was generated by fossil fuels. That was the decision Prince Edward Island made, to the detriment I should say of public authorities in the Province of New Brunswick. It was their right and privilege to make that decision, but it had very serious economic effects. Prince Edward Island refused to have Litton Industries establish an operation in that province which would probably have employed 400 or 500 people. I am proud to say that Litton Industries is now located in the federal constituency of Halifax West and we are getting the benefit of the jobs generated by their activity.

Prince Edward Island in the interests of the people—and I do not dispute that—has embarked upon a course of action that has made economic development relatively difficult.

In the last minute available to me, Mr. Speaker, let me simply say this, and particularly to the Members of the New Democratic Party who fought nuclear submarines, who said: "Cut defence expenditures", aided and