

Borrowing Authority Act

United States, West Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, and Denmark. In terms of the cost of living index, that is to say, the smallest increase in 1978, we are second to the United States in relation to these other countries. In relation to food prices, the least costly in 1978, we came out in first place. In relation to the rate of growth in our real domestic product for the period 1968-1977, we are in first place. In relation to housing starts 1970-1977, we are in second place, right behind Belgium, with the United States in third place.

There are many more statistics. They are based on very reliable sources. They indicate to the hon. member for York-Simcoe and the Canadian public, if ever they are given a chance to see these kinds of statistics, that the Canadian economy is not in that bad shape, particularly when matched against the economies of the major countries of the industrialized world.

I hesitate to repeat this kind of detail, but it seems we have to do this over and over again because the gloom and doom philosophy and the approach of the official opposition are being pushed on the Canadian public, day in and day out. Whenever they get an opportunity, either in this House or in speeches outside, they try to connive the Canadian people into thinking they have a bad deal going for them with the present government in Ottawa, that if given the chance the official opposition will shake up and improve the situation. The substantiation of their claim does not add up when you look at the facts of the situation and get away from their innuendoes which cannot be supported.

● (1642)

I am not sure whether the hon. member for York-Simcoe was bringing things out of the air or not when he referred to the slums of Calcutta and the streets of Cairo. Most Canadians are concerned about the conditions they see in Third World countries, but to suggest for one minute that our situation in Canada is inferior to that of any other major country is to fly directly in the face of the information available. He will get the straight facts if he talks to new Canadians who have come to this country in the last ten, 15 or 20 years. These people will tell him how Canada ranks in relation to other countries around the world. They will give him the story straight, and I am sure he has a good number of new Canadians in his riding, as I have in mine.

An hon. Member: Three years ago, or five maybe.

Mr. Martin: Many of these people have been here during the years of progressive Liberal government from 1963 to the present time, and many of them will also be here as those progressive years of Liberal government continue in times to come.

Mr. Stevens: I was rather enjoying the babbling of the hon. member but I must correct a misundertaking he must have taken from my remarks. I was saying that if you want to see the living standards which existed 200 years ago you can see something comparable in Calcutta or in the slums of Cairo. In no way was I referring to them as being of a contemporary

[Mr. Martin.]

nature in Canada. There is no mystery about the conditions in which people used to live before private enterprise enabled us to reach our present standard of living. In true Liberal fashion, what I said on that subject got distorted.

Mr. Martin: I am delighted to accept that explanation, and I am pleased the hon. member is in no way attempting to indicate that if his party were to become the government of the country we would move any closer to the conditions which exist in those countries. I believe, though, that Canadians would be taking an incredible risk, and I am sure all of them will realize this as the months transpire between now and the time of an election.

The electorate will be asking some of these questions. Questions will not only be coming just from the mouth of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre in the House of Commons. They will be asked on the streets. They will be raised on campaign trails. They will come one after the other, and the hon. member for York-Simcoe, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) and others over there who are eagerly getting ready in their own minds to assume grandiose positions in Ottawa with need to be ready to answer these questions.

An hon. Member: We did in the by-elections.

Mr. Martin: No, you didn't have to answer them in the by-elections because in the by-elections there was one thing the Canadian public knew. They knew that going out to vote against the government could in no way affect the leadership of this country. That was a very important factor to them.

At some point, Mr. Speaker, it might be useful for me to get back to the subject at hand. The only reason I am off it again is because the hon. member for York-Simcoe spent 75 per cent of his debating time on other issues so I am tempted to spend a little of mine responding to him. Again, I want to get back to Petro-Canada and the proposal put forward by that corporation to take over the assets of Pacific Petroleum.

I think it was mentioned by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie), or perhaps by the parliamentary secretary to the House leader or it may have been the hon. member for Fort William (Mr. McRae), that on every opportunity available to it the opposition decries Petro-Canada. Every time they have a chance, they have to try to talk down this corporation, the great work it is doing and the great place it has in the eyes of the Canadian public in attempting to bring us to a position of self-reliance in oil and gas. They do this because they have to back up the statement they have made.

They are stuck with this idea of getting rid of the corporation. So now, having decided they are going to do that, they have continually to find ways of supporting their argument, and every day and every week it gets more difficult to support that particular plank in their platform. It cannot come out of the program now because it is indelibly there in stone, and they are going to have to speak to it over and over again as the months go on. I am not going to get into an argument. We discussed this at great length when the legislation was before this House. I would simply say this to the hon. member for