

• (1120)

I know the hon. member takes great pleasure in telling gloom and doom stories. I wish the growth rate figures were better, but we are doing everything we can in getting the fundamentals right so they will be better.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, if I am wrong so is Statistics Canada which reported today: "Gross Domestic Product slipped .1 in September following a .3 decline in August". The minister better read his own numbers. Unemployment is going up, not down, bankruptcies are going up, not down and the trade deficit is going up, not down. Why is he saying that Canadians are out of the woods when so many of the government's own numbers are going the wrong way and dragging Canadian workers and their communities along with them? Why does he not wake up and not take pleasure in avoiding the real issue? His policies are dragging this economy backward, not pulling it forward.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I will not only re-read the information provided, I will read it to the hon. member: "The national account's data indicates that real output increased by .9 per cent at an annual rate". That is not down, that is up in the third quarter, following a revised gain of 5.7 per cent in the second quarter. That has been revised upward, not downward. "Inventory investment contributed strongly to the growth in the third quarter. Excluding inventories, GDP would have fallen by 1.7 per cent. Purchases of goods and services by Canadians increased at a slightly stronger pace of 1.6 per cent led by continued robust growth in residential investment and government expenditures".

That is the briefing note that I read and I would be glad to table it as well.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, why does the minister not go out and talk to the 90 per cent of Canadians who say that for them the recession is not over?

[*Translation*]

Only a Conservative government, Madam Speaker, would have the gall to tell us that things are going better when the unemployment rate is going up, the bankruptcy rate is at a record high and exports are dropping.

Oral Questions

I ask the minister this: When will he, at long last, give a glimmer of hope to Canadian families? When will he introduce new policies to create employment in Canada instead of destroying it?

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am talking to Canadians. I have commenced the pre-budget consultations wherein I have been talking to business people, to consumer groups, to the retail sector, to anti-poverty groups and to people involved and the disabled.

One thing is very clear. None of them are recommending or suggesting that we try to borrow our way out of this difficulty. None of them are suggesting that we try to spend our way out of this difficulty and therefore drive up the deficit.

The hon. member would like us to throw money at the problem and walk away from it. That is not the consensus of Canadians and it certainly is not the consensus of this government.

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AGRICULTURE

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Madam Speaker, I want to raise a question with the Deputy Prime Minister.

I have here a whole raft of letters from dairy producers, turkey and chicken producers in places like Killarney, Gretna, Morden, Rosenfeld, Manitoba, a whole series of communities.

These farmers know that their very livelihood is now threatened because of serious government mistakes. Under the free trade agreement, the government gave away the right to impose import tariffs on agricultural products and processed foods which totally undermine the marketing system. The government is now losing the battle of article XI at the GATT.

What is the government going to do to protect these farmers? Because of the real threat to these farmers, because of the erosion of article XI, will the government renegotiate with the United States the agreement so that we can restore the sovereign right of Canada to set its own tariffs on processed foods and agricultural products?