What disappoints me most about the constitutional elements in this throne speech is that the parliamentary committee which was made the centrepiece of the new constitutional moves within this document is not going to permit such diversity to be reflected in the decision-making process about our constitutional future.

• (1220)

If we could start to look seriously at a constituent assembly and see it as something that needs to be built for the future, it would be a mechanism which could bring in a wide number of the different groups within this country which are not as fully represented in this Parliament as they should be and, hopefully, as they will be after the next election campaign.

Certainly in our legislature, the New Democratic legislature in Ontario, there is very strong representation of such groups and I hope that will also turn out to be the case in this Parliament after the next election.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, the government, in presenting its Speech from the Throne and in dealing, in particular, with Canada's recent economic performance and economic prospects, offers, briefly, five points as the foundation for its further leadership in the economy. First, the government, in the Speech from the Throne, says quite flatly that economic recovery depends on reducing interest rates. The other four nostrums that the government presents are deficit reduction, tax reform, free trade, and productivity growth. I want to deal with each of those five points in order. I want then to turn to the prospects that Canadians face when they ask themselves what is this government's real commitment to create the circumstances in which our economy can flourish.

As I have just noted, the government has stated flatly that economic recovery depends on reducing interest rates. This is a new-found goal for the government. It is not many months ago, indeed it is only a matter of two months or so ago, when the Prime Minister and his colleagues extolled higher interest rates as the most effective public policy instrument for combating inflation. The government told Canadians that inflation was the worst possible threat that could face them. The harsh medicine of high interest rates was the only possible solution to that problem facing all Canadians.

But what have we seen since then? What has happened? In the last budget the government suddenly decided that its policy was in error. It decided that it was wrong, that it had pursued the incorrect monetary policies, that in fact by imposing on Canadians high interest rates it had hobbled the further development of Canadian industry. It had imposed on Canadians the inability to provide themselves with adequate housing. It had denied the Canadian people the opportunity to participate more actively in the greater global economy.

What did the government do? It suddenly decided, and it was very sudden, that high interest rates were no longer desirable, that the made-in-Canada recession which it had itself brought about by pursuing high interest rates was no longer desirable and that it was a mistake. Now the government says that we are going to have reduced interest rates.

All Canadians must welcome that sudden conversion, but the assurance that we are going to have reduced interest rates cannot be accepted without a certain grain of salt, a certain scepticism, when we see the recent performance of this government.

In the instance of its monetary policy, one can only regard the Speech from the Throne with some real scepticism. On deficit reduction equally, the government has throughout its term of office since 1984 assured Canadians that it would reduce the debt and reduce the service charges on that debt. That was a primary goal the government would pursue to ensure further economic growth in our country, to ensure that the costs of servicing the debt was not a burden on the Canadian exchequer or on the prospects of Canadians as they entered the last decade of this century.

What has happened with debt and deficit reduction is, in fact, quite the contrary. The government somehow lost its courage. It made some initial efforts to reduce government spending and, therefore, to reduce the debt and deficit, but it soon lost its courage and nerve. The result is, today, that, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out earlier, since coming to office the government has driven up the debt to unparalleled levels. It has imposed more and more debt-servicing charges on