

*Government Orders*

I personally cannot understand why the government would not prefer to take a little bit of a leap of faith and put some program money, some capital expenditure money, on the table and have that force working where it obviously is going to move off the unemployment insurance draw and into a position where they are going to become active taxpayers.

This dismantling program, this cut, cut, cut and drive inflation right under the table, I cannot believe that the Bank of Canada is using a contemporary model for calculating inflation. I cannot find inflation anywhere in Toronto.

We met some farmers from western Canada last week and there is no inflation in western Canada. When are we going to stop playing this sort of gymnastic game on inflation and start realizing that there is a little bit of slack left and let us try to put people back to work.

Let us put people back to work. Let us make them taxpayers again and that will address the government's deficit problem a lot more quickly than this cut, cut, cut, demoralize the country program.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur):** Mr. Speaker, I thank you for again giving me an opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-20, a Conservative measure aimed at inflicting hardship on this unfortunate country of ours.

Considering the scope and consequences of this bill, I have no choice but to express my apprehension. This legislation will undermine our education programs, medicare and social programs which have become the hallmark of this country. And the government has the impertinence to do this on the sly, with a bill that seems so harmless and technical, it could go almost unnoticed.

Unfortunately, by introducing such regressive legislation, the government contributes to the erosion of the social fabric of our country. One would think the Conservatives had signed an unconditional surrender and were abandoning Canada to its fate.

• (1750)

As far as federal-provincial relations are concerned, this bill gives notice that the government refuses to be actively involved in developing measures that would help rally people from all regions behind the Canadian flag.

How can a national government be so ruthlessly intent on reducing Canada to an empty shell? Instead of running this country in a responsible way and considering the needs of all citizens, the government is intent on balancing its budget, reducing spending in terms of our national debt and reducing the deficit at the expense of Canadian citizens. The government is using the deficit as an excuse. It has chosen to ignore the cost of the social deficit. It has abdicated its responsibilities.

Therefore, it does nothing to build the country, bring people together and ensure that all Canadians feel that they can benefit from belonging to our country. Since 1977, the federal government has contributed to health and higher education with tax transfers and cash payments.

Federal support for health and post-secondary education was to keep up with total economic growth every year. Unfortunately, since 1986, this support has been reduced, as a result of a series of decisions made by the Conservative government on the pretext of reducing the deficit. According to the report released by the National Council of Welfare last spring, if this trend continues, federal cash payments for health and higher education under the 1977 fiscal arrangements will completely disappear in a few years.

Furthermore, if federal support declines any more, as I said when this measure was debated last spring, Canada will have 12 different provincial and territorial plans, instead of the health insurance plan that we know, which varies little across the country.

If the system breaks up, we will very likely see several regions again allowing extra billing and charging hospital user fees, which the 1984 Canada Health Act almost completely eliminated.