

Government Orders

per cent in 1992. The OECD expects Canada to lead the G-7 in economic growth.

The conditions are in place for growth, but we are well aware that many Canadians are still experiencing the effects of the past recession. Without a doubt, we have work to do to ensure that the recovery is sound and long-lasting. If we waiver, if we let the deficit rise, inflation and interest rates will follow, choking off growth. The balanced measures we have taken, combined with economic recovery and lower interest rates, will push the deficit down.

During the recession of 1981-82, the government of the day chose a different path, allowing the deficit to balloon by \$23 billion from 1982-83 to 1984-85 to a total of \$38.5 billion. It is this burden of debt that we have inherited, all Canadians have inherited, from the previous government which has made the legislation we have before us today so necessary.

There are no quick, painless remedies to our debt problem, only difficult responsibilities we owe to Canadians. The extension of growth ceilings on CAP transfers flows directly from these responsibilities. I urge all members of this House to support this motion and to join us in accepting our fiscal responsibility to all Canadians.

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his remarks. Of all the ministers in this government, he perhaps lays it on the line most clearly. The fact that he has not been able to change the line of the government, change its thinking on this piece of legislation and change its thinking about what is going on in this country, is a testimony both to his own honesty and to the stupidity of the government.

In taking a look at this particular piece of legislation, I am struck by the fact that no matter what group has appeared in front of the committee, no matter which speeches have been given in the House of Commons, no matter which commentator you follow, no matter what the courts have said and no matter what evidence has been presented to this government, this government has failed to change one part of this legislation or one iota of its strategy.

This piece of legislation, Bill C-32, was considered at length by the committee on finance in a special set of hearings that attracted not the usual business oriented

groups to their finance committee, but a long line of groups interested in social policy.

• (1220)

This is not strictly a budgetary act, but is the implementation of a very Draconian social policy. One of the strategies followed by this government since 1985 has been the use of the budget to introduce pieces of legislation which have undermined the current social policy developed in this country since the 1930s.

The evidence is now overwhelming that Canadians are being hurt by the strategy of the federal government. It does not only apply to the reality of the recession. I cannot believe I heard it, but I think I heard the minister say the past recession. If it has passed for him I guess his cheque comes in every month, but it has not passed for the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are still looking for work or who are still facing personal and corporate bankruptcy and are wondering where to turn next.

The fact that members of this House, after being away for six weeks to talk with constituents and to visit with different groups in our areas, can come back and give the same line is a sad commentary on the quality of representation that many Canadians are now receiving.

I must point out that during the hearings some of the groups making presentations pointed out to the federal government that there is a legal opinion that the strategy it is pursuing in Bill C-20 and Bill C-32 is illegal. In an unusual move, the House of Commons committee agreed to attach this legal opinion to the document submitted to the House and it is there for all members to review. We brought in officials from Finance and officials from Justice who were struck by the logic of this particular position. I am surprised that the minister, after having two months to consider this, has not in any way changed the government's position *vis-à-vis* Bill C-32.

Bill C-32 should be withdrawn by this government and fought by the opposition because the situation in Ontario is so dramatically different. To have this historical image that Ontario is a place where there is such economic growth that you can cap expenditures and make people who live there pay a price totally misses the point. Anybody who represents southern Ontario should be aware that the needs of people living in and about