

Government Orders

years will be depleted. The only thing we will be left with is our human resources.

In closing, I totally agree with my colleague, unless investment now starts shifting and focuses on our human resources, that we have quite a challenge.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Before recognizing the next hon. member, I wish to inform the House that the five hours of consideration have now been completed and members will now speak for 10 minutes maximum, with no question and comment period.

Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Mr. Speaker, this morning in the House of Commons we heard the Prime Minister putting forth the proposals of our cabinet in a document entitled *Shaping Canada's Future Together*. The thrust over the last couple of weeks that we have heard from the Prime Minister is a thrust toward co-operation of all parties and of all peoples within Canada, a thrust toward equality, a thrust toward giving people a voice in Canada.

I would like to quote from page 7 of the foreword of the document.

The document states as follows: "Canada must ensure that it is equipped to deal with the economic challenges of the next century. If we are to maintain our prosperity, ensure a high standard of living for our children and continue our effort to reduce the disparities that exist between the regions of Canada, one of the most important and enduring principles of Confederation, we must be prepared to work together more harmoniously and effectively. We must have an economic union that is both modern and truly functional".

Last year under Bill C-69 the government selected three provinces, British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario, out of the 10 provinces and two territories and proceeded to treat them differently, to discriminate if you will against these three provinces because they are the larger provinces and are considered to be have provinces within Confederation.

Under Bill C-32 it is proposing to extend that same unfairness toward the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario by extending the cap at 5 per cent on the Canada Assistance Plan payments, the payments that approximately 25 years ago it had agreed would be funded on an equal basis with the provinces.

The argument might be that these are the have provinces and therefore they can afford to give up some of what they have, but reality finds its way into this argument and shows that the argument is not a valid one.

The reality is that provinces such as Alberta and British Columbia and Ontario, when times are tough, get people moving from other provinces into those areas looking for employment. These people are often the same people who are without unemployment insurance benefits and go with the idea that they will be able to find employment.

In my riding of Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt we have a very high unemployment rate and we have a high rate of people on social assistance for that very reason. It is a wonderful climate and during the summer there are jobs available in the Okanagan region particularly and in the Similkameen Valley in the fruit picking industry.

What often happens is that people come from other provinces without money in their pockets and they must turn to social assistance until they get a job. Then it falls on the people of British Columbia to pick up the tab for those from other areas of the province. That shows part of the unfairness.

If we couple what this government is doing now under Bill C-32 with Bill C-21, the Unemployment Insurance Act, where it cut down the qualification time, you are again hurting the people in my area because often, with the seasonal nature of fruit picking, they do not get the required number of weeks in order to apply for unemployment insurance.

What do they do when they are without work? They turn to the social assistance area for that assistance.

That is the problem that we have with this bill. It is not reflected in the 5 per cent of growth. Well over that 5 per cent I think is reflected on a year-to-year basis because places like Alberta and British Columbia particularly are areas in which people enjoy coming to look for employment and perhaps to live, particularly if they are not employed, because it is a wonderful climate.

By attacking these areas I think we are effectively attacking what they have set out here, the harmony, increasing the standard of living for all of us, by saying we are not going to assist you, we are not going to keep up with our end of the deal, a fifty-fifty split on the Canada Assistance Plan. We are not going to fund it. We are going to leave it to the taxpayers of your province.