

The Address—Mr. O'Kurley

You and I both know, Madam Speaker, that no matter what the Government does, no matter how responsible or successful it is, we will also see the opposition Parties criticizing every move that is made, predicting disaster at every turn, and offering no constructive advice just as they have done since 1984. However, the Government's resolve is firm and our plan is not about placating special interests. It is about the national interest.

• (1620)

You will also see the opposition Parties criticizing every move that is made, predicting disaster at every turn and offering no constructive advice, just as they have done since 1984. But the Government's resolve is firm. Our plan is not about placating special interests. It is about the national interest. Let us work together to realize a positive vision for Canada. Let us work together to build a better Canada. Let us all work together from all Parties, from all regions of the country to build a better future for Canada.

Merci beaucoup, Madame le président.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Questions or comments.

[Translation]

M. Malépart: Madam Speaker, I would first like to congratulate the Hon. Member for his remarks. One could see that he is a new Member. I know he spoke from the heart. But he blamed the Opposition. I would like to remind him that it was under pressure from the Opposition that the Government finally lived up to its commitment following an attempt to cut old age pensions. It was under pressure from the Opposition that the Government gave back their unemployment benefit entitlements to people in his riding. It was under pressure from the Opposition that the Government backed down after having announced it was going to tax stable commodities such as bread and butter. I should think that the Hon. Member will realize that Members on both sides of the House can play a positive role, but that opposition is our only guarantee against dictatorship.

[English]

Mr. O'Kurley: I thank the Hon. Member from the Opposition for that statement. I would just like to respond by saying that with respect to old age pensions I think Canada as a nation can be proud that we are leaders in the world community in providing well-being for our seniors and for many of our citizens.

There were discussions during the last term with respect to various different ways of trying to solve some of the problems in many of the social programs. I think it is fair to say that it is not unreasonable for a government to look at all programs and to look at ways of making them more efficient and more effective and make them serve the purpose which they were intended to serve.

I appreciate the comment that the Opposition does have a role. I appreciate the Opposition when it provides constructive criticism and when it plays a useful and purposeful role in this House.

Mr. Whittaker: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the early 1980s, we witnessed something similar to what is occurring under this Government, the raising of interest rates which began sky-rocketing, the subsequent destruction of many small business persons within Canada, but particularly in the West and in the eastern provinces.

At the present time we have interest rates once again rising, and the Member has indicated that in fact it is causing part of our problem with the stabilization within the Government's deficit problem.

Small businesses need assurance, as do young persons borrowing money for the first time that those interest rates will be lowered and stabilized.

My question is, if we do not stabilize the interest rates, how can the small business person and the new home owner have any confidence in the economic programs of this Progressive Conservative Government?

Mr. O'Kurley: Again, I will thank the Member for his very reasonable question with regard to interest rates. Madam Speaker, interest rates are set or used as a tool not only to control inflation in our own various regions of our own country, but they are also used as a tool to influence our competitive position in the international trading community. Unfortunately, we, as a country, are not an island. We live in a global community. Perhaps we have to recognize the realities of living in an international community if we want to keep our country strong in the long run. Perhaps we might have to do some things that are uncomfortable in the short run. I agree with you that there are parts of the country that suffer a negative impact when interest rates rise. However, I would like to commend governments like the Progressive Conservative Government in the Province of Alberta who have implemented an interest shielding program for people wanting to get new mortgages. I think that perhaps we have to look at very positive ways of dealing with the regional problems while, at the same time, not compromising our international interests.