

Government Orders

Precisely the same thing is true with respect to the objections under the auto pact which were put forward from Michigan. The various congressmen and senators from the state of Michigan who were concerned about Canadian exports under the auto pact into the United States emphasized the low value of the Canadian dollar.

I think that one has that set of evidence to look at. One has the set of evidence that I have talked about today. One has as well the fact that ever since the trade deal has come into effect, a gap has grown between interest rates in this country and in the United States, which is something which we have never seen historically in this country at that kind of level.

We are talking about a percentage point difference of from four to five percentage points which, given the fact that inflation rates are very similar between the two countries, means that the only conceivable consequence of that huge gap in interest rates would be to raise the value of the Canadian dollar.

We have not seen a reduction in the Canadian inflation rate relative to the American inflation rate. What we have seen is what all these people were suggesting was necessary for the free trade deal and that is a marked increase in the value of the Canadian dollar from the level of about 73 cents, which it was in 1985, to the level of approximately 86 cents, which it presently is.

Of course, that is damaging in the extreme to all of our exporters no matter which part of the country they are in; British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, or Atlantic Canada. It is an incredibly damaging blow to our potential as a country to provide jobs and incomes.

The facts, therefore, speak for themselves. It is those facts that we have to look at in judging whether or not Mr. Stevens' comments this past weekend should be taken seriously or not. Do the facts conform with what Mr. Stevens suggested? Unfortunately, for the government, and unfortunately for its suggestions that this is not the case, the facts indeed do conform exactly with what one would expect to have taken place if Mr. Stevens had indeed been telling the truth.

I have to say that the statement of this past week demonstrates yet again the irresponsibility of this government which has led to the damage which this economy is now suffering, the first made in Canada recession which Canada has ever experienced.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. Debate.

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. I understand that I am the last speaker on this particular bill before the House which is the Financial Administration Act.

I have just a couple of points concerning provisions in the bill that are, quite frankly, bad legislation for the people of Canada. One of them deals with collection agencies. One deals with saltfish, and the other one could deal with air traffic control centres in Vancouver and in eastern Canada.

The first one concerns collection agencies. Clause 5 of the bill enables the Government of Canada to hire collection agencies in any department, in any Crown corporation, in any agency of the federal government to collect moneys that are owed the Government of Canada. Collection agencies.

The Minister of Justice is sitting here. The minister knows the procedure today whereby a department of government collects it money.

• (1730)

First, a person is given a reasonable opportunity to make the payment. If that fails and if the person defaults on his or her payments, then perhaps through a third party attachment the wages are attached. Or, the person who is due money by that agency or that department has it taken off a bit at a time.

That is the standard procedure used by the Government of Canada and its departments. In legislation passed by this Chamber we have clauses in certain bills that terminate moneys owed to the Government of Canada over certain periods of time. In other words, there are two ways in which something can be forgiven. One is, in certain legislation, if it imposes undue hardship on the person involved. Second, in some legislation there is a time limit. In other words, in some legislation it is set out that moneys cannot be collected beyond three years from the date at which the individual was notified that he or she owed money to the department.

Now that is the jurisprudence we have in Canada today. That is reasonable law. What is the Minister of Justice and the Government of Canada doing by putting forward this proposed legislation and saying throughout the legislation that collection agencies are now to be used by the Government of Canada, not only in the restricted sense that we have today to collect the student loans that are overdue but in every agency of the