

*Government Orders*

without a gun at their heads. This means they can have an orderly repayment of their debts so that they can save jobs. When a business goes bankrupt we lose jobs and we lose productive people from the economy and the community.

This bill goes a long way toward fixing that. We support those provisions and they were equally contributed to by all parties in this House. Even after that rocky period in November, December and January we have shown that this place can still work and we have pulled it together, and the minister has been able to bring this back to the House.

However, we cannot sit here and talk about bankruptcy without really understanding what has happened in the last 12 months. I started off my speech by saying that in the last 12 months a lot has happened in my life. I have a new child who is going to be a year old on June 13. This bill has been in and out, up and down, and all over the place. All kinds of things have happened here. However one of the things that—

**Mr. Blais:** Do you still want blue flowers?

**Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth):** You can send more flowers, though make them red this time.

One of the other unfortunate things that has happened is that the recession, which this government denied was a reality for so long, continued at a breakneck pace. Between June 13 of last year and June 13 of this year about 70,000 individual Canadians and Canadian businesses have been forced into bankruptcy. There have been billions of dollars in liabilities left over by those companies.

• (2140)

In 1991 in Nova Scotia alone there was one bankruptcy for every 305 Nova Scotians. Think about that. It means in every neighbourhood in Nova Scotia, people have either lost their jobs because of a bankruptcy, perhaps have had to file for personal bankruptcy, or somehow are affected by this outbreak, this plague of bankruptcies that is spreading through the economy.

It has to be understood when we talk about the statistics on bankruptcy they are not just sterile numbers. These are real people. They are just like me or the minister. They have families, children, parents, they contribute to their community. They have some pride, integrity, and they work hard.

People find themselves up against that big grindstone of debt because they have lost their jobs, cannot pay their mortgages, their kids cannot get into sports, and maybe they cannot even feed their families without going to a food bank. They lose their integrity, that sense of community, of being able to contribute to their family and their community.

Each and every one of these cases where somebody is forced into a bankruptcy is a personal tragedy. It is not something that just goes away the day they get their discharge. Unfortunately there is a stigma attached which is with them for the rest of their lives. They have problems with their spouses, their children, their parents, their neighbours, because the emotional anxiety they go through may never be erased.

Many times they never again contribute to the same extent they had contributed when they were productive members before the stigma of bankruptcy.

There was a new record established every month for the last 16 or 17 months. We broke records in this country; not of productivity, not of employment growth, but of a growth in bankruptcies. There was a tragedy unfolding.

Since this government's made-in-Canada recession began there has been over 130,000 Canadians, individuals, businesses, which have gone belly up. It is fine for the government to spend all their time talking about their prosperity budget, \$50 million here, \$25 million there. These people have been the real casualties of this government's economic policies.

There is a lot of stuff we do not like in this bill. I do not like the fact the wage earner protection fund has been done away with. There are a few provisions I would like to see changed but I have some sense of what I am supposed to be doing as a member of Parliament. I think most members of this House have.

When we look at the economic calamity taking place in every corner of this nation, when we look at an unemployment rate in the province of Newfoundland in excess of 20 per cent, when we look at over 1.5 million Canadians unemployed, when we look at over one million Canadian children living in poverty and 2.5 million Canadians on welfare, anything we can do on this side of the House to offer even a modicum of relief we will support.