

Government Orders

We find ourselves in an unfortunate dilemma with this legislation here in Ontario. Twelve months ago the Government of Ontario decided that the best fiscal policy was to buy itself out of the recession. As a result, it originally forecast almost a \$10 billion deficit which has now been increased, as I understand it, to about \$13 billion or \$14 billion. It has changed course and just recently decided that it cannot buy itself out of this recession, so it has come to the federal government to ask for mammoth amounts of money in order to relieve the unemployment situation.

What we find ourselves in, particularly in the province of Ontario, is this unholy alliance between the NDP in Ontario and the Conservative Party, which is trying to put a cap on spending. It truly spells disaster not only for the economy of Ontario but for the country as a whole.

This bill is so contentious, it is so harmful, it is so hurtful, it is so odious that the province of British Columbia, in conjunction with Ontario and Alberta, brought this bill, to cap the allowances that they were allowed, to the Supreme Court of British Columbia. They received a favourable ruling. Eventually this bill went to the Supreme Court of Canada and it said that the decision made in British Columbia was non-operable and the decision was reversed.

Although there was some discussion about that—I am glad the Solicitor General is in the House today—if you read that decision, you will find that what the Supreme Court of Canada was saying to us was that it was not going to interfere in the legislative process of this country. The court listened to the argument but I think the obiter of the case, the reading, the tone of that decision was that legislation is the mandate of this House. If you want to have any spending or any other fiscal responsibility with respect to how that money is spent, it does not come under the guidance of the courts. The courts are there to interpret what is said and this House passes the legislation.

I am very glad that in reading that particular decision that a division between the interpretation of the legislation and the legislation itself that was passed is the proper course that we all must follow.

Through no fault of their own, all too many Canadians have been caught in the grip of a very serious recession. I am often prompted by what we have been hearing on television, recession to all of us who have jobs, but a depression to so many in Canada today who have no jobs. This legislation will, in effect, limit the Canada Assistance Plan and will hurt most of the people in Canada who need it.

Payments to the so-called have provinces will be subject to a ceiling not of two years but, as I said, of five years. This is completely unacceptable.

Canada used to be known as a caring society but no one can help noticing the slide toward a society that imposes an even greater burden on the disadvantaged who are among us.

The focus of the bill under discussion has three targets: the provinces of Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. These provinces have historically been viewed as the have provinces. I was impressed by the comments of our friend from Newfoundland who said that we can no longer look at the provinces in isolation one to the other. We talk about Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario as the have provinces but we will never be a united country unless we look at all of the provinces, realize the needs of each and every one of them individually and pass legislation in this House that is equal and compatible to all. If anyone is hurting in British Columbia, we should have the same care and compassion for that person, that Canadian, as the person who may be hurting in Newfoundland.

• (1800)

I am satisfied with that kind of a philosophy. With the economic union of Canada we can help all Canadians. We should not be looking at provinces as have provinces and have not provinces.

Close to 50 per cent of Canada's poorest families and 54 per cent of all welfare recipients under the Canada Assistance Plan today live in Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia. The government has decided to cap the Canada Assistance Plan right through to the end of 1995 and assumes that payments will grow in proportion to the increase of the Gross National Product.

We all know, Mr. Speaker, from everything that we have heard in this House today that there is not going to be an increase in the Gross National Product in Canada in 1992, so that cap is not a fictitious cap, it is a real cap, and those figures are set. We on this side of the House