

lose something as a result of the agreement. At five per cent higher than those of the Americans, our interest rates made it impossible to modernize our industries, not to mention the fact that keeping our dollar above 80 cents is a serious handicap for our export companies. As a result we lost 160,000 manufacturing jobs and Canada's agriculture has taken a turn for the worst.

Of course the government will claim that its policies were designed to win the fight against inflation, but again the government is wrong.

• (1250)

Allow me to recall what the Economic Council said last week about the fight against inflation: "At our own expenses we have learned that fighting inflation through restrictive monetary policies will produce results only if it paves the way for a recession, but that in turn reduces employment, investments and export sales. Therefore we should seek other solutions."

Mr. Speaker, the economic policy of this government is utterly dated, our economy is stagnant, we have lost our competitive edge, and our economic posture is decadent. What can be done? It is very simple. We must quickly reset our sights and regain our competitiveness, and it is in that context that I would like to tell you about sustainable development.

[English]

Our economy is in tatters. A dramatic reversal in government policy is required if we are to turn the situation around and it is within that context that I would like to discuss with the House for the remainder of my time the concept of sustainable development.

Before going on, let me say a couple of things about environmental protection. Environmental protection in my opinion, and in the opinion of all of those on this side of the House, needs no economic buttressing. Environmental protection is a moral value. We are part of the ecosystem. We are not dominant over it. It may have been in the earliest of prehistory, when humankind had to struggle for its very survival, that the concept of being dominant over nature was important, but surely ever since the Industrial Revolution when we had it within our power to totally destroy the planet on which we live, the concept that humankind must be dominant and must be engaged in a war with nature is one that is no longer applicable.

Supply

Environmental protection is a moral value and for that reason I do not raise sustainable development here because it needs economic buttressing. Quite the opposite. I raise sustainable development because I believe that it is virtually impossible to have a strong economy unless one takes into account the needs of the ecosystem of the earth on which we live.

Furthermore, properly costed, I do not believe that it is possible for any kind of a project—industrial, private sector, municipal, provincial, or federal—to take place that in any way degrades the environment. It is simply faulty economics to say that one can build a project and degrade the environment because the costs to successive generations will be so great as to negate whatever returns one has. If anybody in this room has any doubt about that, then I would simply ask them to take a look at the terrible scenes of pillage that have occurred in eastern Europe as whole societies tried to build an economy without taking into account the environment. Whole societies are now on the ground economically because they did not understand that you cannot destroy the air we breath, the water we drink, and expect to maintain any kind of competitiveness within the industrial agricultural process.

What is sustainable development? It has been defined by some as more of a compass than, indeed, a finite target toward which one must go. I tend to share that view. I also have always liked the definition of sustainable development that was first given to us by the Haida Indians on British Columbia's coast. They said that the environment, the earth, is not a heritage which we have inherited from our ancestors, but rather it is something very precious which we have borrowed from our grandchildren.

In more recent times, the Prime Minister of Norway, Mrs. Brundtland, defined it as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Unfortunately, sustainable development does not appear to be a part of the government's vocabulary. In the preamble and in the purposes of Bill C-78, the Environmental Assessment Review Act, the government did not see fit to put in the words "sustainable development". We are about to embark upon a new generation in the way in which we are going to govern the economy in the environment and the government does not have the decency or the understanding of the way in which the