referring to money in their comments. Heaven knows we have been hearing about it for some time. Heaven knows that this small Bill C-7 which may appear insignificant—it has two pages at most—is deemed by the public as being of very minor importance.

However, Mr. Speaker, Bill C-7 includes a request by the government to the Parliament of Canada to increase its borrowing authority by the fairly large sum of $7 billion for the current fiscal year. This is a small bill but it has serious consequences. The estimates for the current fiscal year already provided for a deficit amounting to something like $11.5 billion; moreover, through Bill C-7, the government is asking parliament to give them an additional borrowing authority of $10 billion for the period beginning March 31, 1979 and ending April 1, 1980.

In both cases, it is stipulated in the bill that such loans will be used for public works and general purposes. However, Mr. Speaker, we are not told what are those general purposes. Is it to extend the Old Age Security Act to cover people who are between 60 and 65 years old? Is it to offer financial aid to the provinces so that in turn they can help municipalities where the property tax is too heavy for homeowners who can hardly finance the construction of roads, water works and sewers? Is it to increase funds for RRAP and the Canada Works program? There is no mention about it in the bill. But, in a question I put last week to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Ouellet), I pointed out that the program was good but that it did not provide enough money for the provinces and the owners of homes in need of repair, so that in the end the program does not give the results we had hoped for. With regard to the Canada Works program whose budget was slashed by 20 per cent to 30 per cent, the situation is really deplorable at a time like this when unemployment stands at an extremely high level.

I know of municipalities in my riding where the rate of unemployment is something like 58 per cent. Those are not my figures but those of people who were hired to make surveys and collect them; the manpower centres supply them to us.

Mr. Speaker, adding the figures in clauses 2 and 3 of the bill, we find that we are dealing with loans totalling $17 billion. That is why I said a moment ago that the bill is indeed very heavy, though it does not cover much paper. The interest on the increase in the national debt is roughly $18 million a day, which represents $6.5 billion for the current fiscal year. With these recent borrowings, we might have to pay even larger sums of money in interests, which will further increase the financial burden of the taxpayers.

● (2132)

Mr. Speaker, when an individual, a family or a corporation makes debts larger than he or it should, he or it goes straight to bankruptcy, and the same can be said of governments. How could it be otherwise? Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote some figures so that the Canadian public, who have a right to know what is going on, can think about it and help parliament change what has to be changed if we are to improve the situation.

Has Canada's debt gone up or down in the last few years? Has the burden of our net national debt increased or decreased? We have to ask these questions and we have to get answers.

If so, would it not be urgent to change the way we finance the public sector? Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I believe it is the duty of this parliament to examine closely the alarming progression of the national debt. At the time the confederation was formed, on July 1, 1867, the national debt stood at about $75 million. Later on there was the cost of Canada's involvement in World War I as well as various other small undertakings that had occurred in the meantime, and also the economic crisis which lasted for ten years and was brought about by the crash at the New York stock exchange on October 24, 1929, exactly 49 years ago today, which is a sad anniversary but still an anniversary. The crisis was not triggered by Providence but by human beings, because the stock exchange is controlled by human beings, it is manipulated for one's own profit, it is operated by human beings, Mr. Speaker, and those who have a memory for facts must recall that during these ten years our country was poverty stricken, a great many Canadians experienced very serious difficulties, and this in an affluent society. I have known farmers in my area who did not have enough income to pay their debts, yet their stables were full of animals, their fields were producing bumper crops, but they were unable to pay, despite all the things they could sell, despite this plentifulness, there was nothing they could do, trade was paralysed, while in the cities, my God, people were dying of hunger because of a lack of distribution.

Afterwards, Mr. Speaker, our country's debt grew. Over 72 years our debt amounted to $3 billion, for 72 years, until 1939. By March 31, 1968, Canada's debt had reached $33 billion, and during that period there was World War II and other smaller conflicts like those in Viet Nam and in Korea where Canada participated, and we had to pay.

As of March 31, 1977, Mr. Speaker, nine years later, the national debt, as published in *Hansard* following a question I asked and which was answered on June 5, 1978, the net debt is estimated at about $67 billion and the way things go, I expect that by March 31, 1979 it will have soared to approximately $80 billion.

Mr. Speaker, we will not be able to continue to finance the public sector by this method without running the risk of leaving the next generation with a legacy of debts whose interest charge will paralyse economic progress and cause division between the various provincial and federal governments. That is not the way to ensure harmony in Canada. I have already said it in this House: it is the difficulties that governments have to find the money they need to meet their