

Government Orders

withdrawn that from people's lives and Bill C-32 is the latest example of that.

I began by saying that I come from the province of Newfoundland. I hasten to say that I am first and foremost and always a Canadian. I am proud to be a Canadian. I am proud to share in this nation's prosperity. I am proud to share in its opportunity and I am prepared to carry my share of the burden of its difficulties when difficulty comes.

That is why I cannot accept this concept that somehow it is okay to say to Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia that they are "wealthy provinces and we are going to limit the federal government's contribution to social programs, welfare programs to those wealthy provinces. But we are not going to touch you in Newfoundland, so do not worry. It is not your business. It is not your issue. It is not your fight".

I am a Canadian. Newfoundlanders regard themselves in the overwhelming majority, first and foremost, as Canadians. Anything that touches their fellow Canadians, that negatively penalizes their fellow Canadians and in particular those Canadians who are least able to help themselves, affects Newfoundland.

Therefore, I can say with authority, on behalf of the people of my province, that we reject this bill. We challenge members opposite to stand and defend it or to withdraw it.

Nobody knows better than Newfoundlanders this past winter how tough times are in Canada. Nobody knows better than Newfoundlanders this winter that governments are being forced to make hard choices. I have been in communities this winter where the fishery failed this past summer. I went to a meeting at a house and when I went into the house I discovered that the next door neighbours had closed their house down, drained their water lines and moved in to stay with their neighbour because it was cheaper for two families to live in one house than to live in two separate houses. That is the reality of life in some rural Newfoundland communities.

That is the reality in St. Julien's on the great northern peninsula. That was the reality for two families I visited a month ago in the community of Croque. Times are tough, but I did not hear one person say to me that the solution to the problems and the desperation and the human misery and suffering in St. Julien's or in Croque or in St. Anthony or in White Bay or in the Baie Verte Peninsula or in the Bay of Islands, all of them having had

a devastating failure in the fishery, that their solution could be found in visiting additional misery upon the poorest of the poor in the provinces of Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.

The issue here is not dollars and cents. The issue here is not the making of budgets or fiscal integrity. The issue here is a moral issue; it has nothing to do with political ideology. This is not another issue for the ideological battleground between right and left; this is a moral issue.

• (1700)

I would call upon my colleagues, particularly those opposite who contemplate supporting this measure, to examine their hearts and souls and their consciences in this great Canadian winter of discontent, to think about some of the people they met during the last six weeks when we all went back to our constituencies. I hope members were out talking to people. It is not pleasant. I have been here 12 years—that is not long compared to some of my colleagues—but this is the most difficult winter I have seen. It has never been tougher. Misery has never been easier to find, never been harder to escape.

I hope that members will examine their conscience, and I know they will, will speak within their caucus and will convince the government in the current circumstances, in the current bitter recession that Canada is experiencing, the current unity crisis that this country is feeling, that this will not bring our country together. This does not represent justice for anybody. This is not a way to resolve our fiscal problems. This is not how we should balance the books, on the backs of those who can least afford it.

I hope members opposite will see this bill withdrawn. If the government insists on proposing it, putting it, I hope they will find the courage to stand and vote against it.

Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Meritt): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken on Bill C-32 at second reading and I was hoping that by this stage the government would have come to its senses. I hope that government members had the opportunity to go around their ridings and contiguous ridings to theirs and speak to the people affected by the legislation about the direction that this government has carried this country over the past years since it was elected in 1984. Perhaps they also spoke to them about the tumble that we have taken since 1988, since the institution of the free trade agreement, the goods and services tax, the clawback, the unemploy-