

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC POLICY

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Ms. Copps (p. 14701).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): After consideration, the Speaker is ready to declare that the amendment moved by the hon. member for Essex—Windsor is in order.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity today to speak to the motion tabled by the Liberal Party and its spokesperson and to the amendment moved by the NDP.

In a debate like this, I think it is important to consider what the situation was like in the past, what it is like now, and what we would like to see in the future. In this context, we must talk about productivity growth. It is not a new phenomenon, and I think many people in this country are familiar with the word. However, if we look at the statistics, we see that in this country, we need to improve our current level of productivity if we are to progress. As I say this, we are aware, of course, that Canada is recovering from a world recession. Although you may hear the opposition parties say this is a made-in-Canada recession, you and I know perfectly well that is not true. Most countries in the world have experienced or are experiencing economic problems.

If we look at world growth, in 1988 it was 4.3 per cent, while this year, in 1992, it will be about 1 per cent. The United States, Japan, Great Britain, Germany and all other industrialized countries, including Canada, have had a very difficult year as far as the economy and growth are concerned. Furthermore, Canada is now undergoing major industrial restructuring. We all know about the liberalization of trade with the United States, Mexico and the rest of the world. We also know that technical

Supply

and technological changes are accelerating in this country. We may not come first. We may not lead in that field. Maybe we should step up our efforts.

• (1530)

Our productivity, technological changes, the global recession, all have to be taken into consideration when the Minister of Finance comes up with an economic plan. The opposition takes the plan and throws it in the garbage. It says: "It is no good" without even having looked the whole thing over, as I just said, and without suggesting alternatives either, which is unfortunate.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when you are talking about this or that with your colleagues and you disagree with one of them, you normally say something like: "I do not agree on this or that and I think this is what we should do. I think that the answer is No. 4".

What we are seeing here is the opposition saying: "What the government is suggesting is no good". That is all we have been hearing for three, four days now—I am not sure exactly how long any more. They keep repeating this without offering sound, practical alternatives. We have to be realistic here.

The members opposite talked about a \$12 billion road infrastructure project across the country. It might be a fine idea, but it is just not practical in the present Canadian economic context with the debt we inherited from that government in the context of 1980–81. We all know the difficult times we have gone through then. Inflation was 10 per cent. Interest rates were running as high as 22, 23 and 24 percent. They are suggesting we increase the deficit and allow inflation to rise again. Automatically, interest rates will start rising too. Then what? You end up with job creation projects for six or eight months, a year if you are lucky, without the real issues, the problem with productivity, new technologies and the global recession having been dealt with.

That is what we have to work with, the basic factors, and the Minister of Finance has done just that. That is why his economic plan is sound. It is hard to stomach. Not everyone is happy with it. I for one. But this plan is set in a Canadian and global context.