

Government Orders

may even be costing me money to go across the line to buy something, but by God I don't have to pay the GST. I'm going to show the government what I think of the GST by going across the border to shop". They are voting on the GST with their feet by crossing the border to shop. The government does not seem to get that through its head. The impact of that is tremendous on Canada because the bulk of the Canadian population lives within 50 miles of the American border.

Get rid of the free trade deal.

Those are three concrete things. I could go on with other alternatives. This government has simply got to ensure that Canadians in every province are back working.

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, first of all, no matter what side of the House one is on or what side of the question one is on, I think everyone would agree that the member for Surrey North shows great tenacity and at the same time sincerity on this issue. He has brought this to caucus on more than one occasion, saying this is an issue that we should address and give higher priority.

My question is very simple. Consider Bill C-21, Bill C-28, Bill C-69, Bill C-32 and other bills which I do not have the appropriate numbers for. Basically they are saying and doing the same thing. How long do we have? How much time is there before the erosion becomes literally an avalanche and our social assistance programs are completely deteriorated to a point of no return?

Mr. Karpoff: It is very difficult to say exactly how long we have. My feeling is that we have maybe one or two more years, particularly if the economy remains the same as it is now. What the Tory government has done is create a recession. It has changed the UIC rules which meant that fewer people qualified for UIC for shorter periods of time. Therefore, they had to go on income assistance sooner and for longer periods of time. They have simply changed the UIC rules in a manner that put the load again on the provinces and the local governments.

I think the real reason why we are short of time deals with the concept of Canada. Canadians could feel proud of their social programs. That was one of the things that united us. They knew that they could go to British Columbia and be entitled to income assistance no matter

where they were from. This government, however, has said: "No, we are going to make a differentiation among Canadians by province. We are going to penalize the poor in three provinces. We are going to penalize battered women in three provinces". It is this concept, the erosion of our social fabric, that is probably the single greatest threat to Canada.

• (1210)

People are saying: "We had a concept of Canada. We had an understanding of services such as health care, income assistance, job training programs and services to children who were in jeopardy. It was based on the federal government being involved and being concerned about all its citizens. It has destroyed all of that".

One hears the provinces saying: "If you are going to cut off our money and we are still expected to pick up the people who are coming from Newfoundland and Manitoba why don't we just pull out and run on our own? What is the point of belonging to Canada?"

That is what is undermining a great deal of Canadians' confidence in this government. They do not see this government understanding the fabric of the Canadian society and the commitment that Canadians have to social programs.

Canadians will express this in the next election by bringing the greatest defeat of any Canadian government in the history of Canada.

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this very important debate. I have to say it is one of the most important debates that I have ever heard in this House. The government opposite will have a lot to explain to Canadians particularly as it relates to this bill.

Most Canadians who are listening know that this is Bill C-32, just a simple and innocuous bill. We have had 17 minutes in third reading from the Opposition. The Minister of State for Finance, oddly enough, is from Ontario where this bill is going to hurt so many, at least 1 million people, because of this minister's lack of ability to understand what this problem is all about.

I cannot believe on third reading that we have not heard from certain Conservative members of Parliament: 46 from Ontario, 12 from British Columbia and 22 from Alberta. This bill is directly affecting the people in those provinces.