

Government Orders

Where was the plan to raise our debt over 100 per cent, over \$100 billion? It is a debt that is now costing the taxpayer, every year, about \$39 billion in interest charges. Where was your plan? If you have it, produce it.

• (1720)

Mrs. Dobbie: Madam Speaker, the hon. gentleman knows very well that the debt was out of control when this government took over in 1984. It is very difficult to turn a trend around that has been entrenched in the country by the Liberals for over a period of 20 years or 30 years. I think that in the last five years the government has made remarkable progress in trying to return this economy to something that is rational and that will put more dollars in the pockets of Canadians, more choices in the pockets of Canadians, more jobs out there for Canadians, and more opportunities for business people.

We were going backward before. Now at least our plans are putting us in the place where we can progress forward.

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Madam Speaker, we have heard a great example which reminded me of the deceased British philosopher, Bertrand Russell. When asked one day about economists, he said he knew of only two economists in the world who understood the intricacies of international monetary economic systems. But, he said, unfortunately, they disagree on the solutions. I guess like statistics and like economists, the more figures and the more economists you can have.

I would ask a fundamental question. Is it the conventional wisdom of the day if one were to ask an economist or people who discuss economics—we hear a lot about inflation—how would we define inflation? Conventional wisdom tells us that inflation, in very common terms, is too many dollars going after too few goods. Does anybody in the country feel that there is a lack of goods on the market? Does anybody feel there are too many dollars on the market after these goods? It is incredible that we can live in a highly technical society and yet pay homage to a myth. It is incredible that this myth can continue. We talk about inflation, but do we really know any more what brings it about? I doubt it.

I hear economists discussing how the economy works. One thing I grant to most economists is that they are experts at explaining where they went wrong once the damage is done.

When it comes to the budget, the average Canadian undoubtedly finds the whole budget process a confusing mass—I will not say mess—of information. Basically we want to know how much we are going to have to pay and, if the occasion ever arose, how much less. Most people do not have the time or the inclination to study the whole budgetary process. It is a complicated, highly complex system, to say the least. Even at that there are many factors that come into play. Of course, there are what we call political considerations. There are interest groups represented by some form of lobby to put forward an argument or favour. Big business interests are taken seriously because it is concerned that we have a strong economy; at least that has always been its line.

What is the role of the majority of the Canadian taxpayers or working Canadians? Where is the input from the backbone of the country, the middle class? Most people refer to themselves as part of the middle class. There are some who feel they are part of the middle class, but with the difficulties of the last years we find there are more people joining the ranks of the less fortunate, to say the least. The government claims to be very sensitive to the concerns of the middle class, which is obviously the backbone of the country and very essential in the democratic process. But, if that fundamental sector of our society is no longer effective, or that the input has been reduced to the point that it is no longer significant, the question is: Where is this whole philosophy we have in the country for many years which distinguishes us from many countries, that we want to be our brother's keeper? Although most members of the House belong to the middle class, we would have to say that our input is decreasing year by year.

For the last I do not know how many years, we have had unbelievable deficits in the country. We have this government that came into power more than five years ago which was going to solve the whole problem of the deficit. Obviously we have seen the results. It more than doubled it over the past years.

Nevertheless, government members claimed that they had the solution to reduce it. Time is running out for