

*Government Orders*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** The Speaker has taken under consideration the amendment tabled by the hon. member for Essex—Windsor and I expect to make a ruling after Question Period.

**Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West):** Mr. Speaker, we are talking today about an economic plan that is, to quote the Prime Minister, staying the course. Let us look at what kind of a course we are staying on.

We are looking at a course that has brought us the highest number ever of Canadians out of work. Canadians are worried about how they are going to put food on the table, how they are going to pay the rent or mortgage, how they are going to send their kids to school. We are talking about staying a course that has brought us a record number of bankruptcies, both individually and personally. We are talking about staying a course that has brought us a record level of poverty. We now have close to four million Canadians living in poverty, one million of whom are children. Food banks across this country are in greater numbers than McDonald's and one third of the people using those food banks are children.

We are staying the course because it is supposed to reduce the deficit. This is the same course that we are now into the ninth year of hearing is going to reduce the deficit. Instead, we have a higher deficit, not a lower deficit. The deficit itself has doubled. Is that deficit paying for more services? Is it paying for programs to address the economic misery in this country? It is not. What we are spending now on programs and services to Canadians has dramatically reduced and this increased deficit is going to pay the debt.

We were going to reduce the debt. This course we are on, and I have read it in every budget statement since 1984, is going to reduce the debt.

How much is the debt reduced? It has gone up by over 200 per cent, up not down. In every budget since 1984 the government has said that it is going to create more jobs. Instead, we see jobs leaving this country, disappearing by the tens of thousands, and by the hundreds of thousands in total, since this government took office.

The only people in Canada who do not know that this course is destroying this country, bringing unprecedented misery to Canadians, reducing our opportunities to have the kind of future that this country and Canadians

deserve, the only people who do not know that is what this course of action is doing are the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Employment and Immigration and all those sitting on the other side of the House.

We have this kind of a budget because this government sees its popularity vanishing down the drain and drifting into the hands of the Reform Party. It is doing everything it can to steal back votes from the Reform Party, votes from a party that says the "I'm all right, Jack" philosophy of citizenship and of governments is what works. Those who have should continue to prosper. Those who do not should continue to fail in increasing numbers.

A good government and a good society is not about dog eat dog competitiveness, where only the strongest, wealthiest, most powerful and most vicious survive. That is not what this country is about.

The only positive thing I can see in this economic statement is the small bit of assistance that is being offered to small businesses. We have a small business loan program in this country that is not working for small businesses. We know the rate at which those businesses have been going out of business. We know the rate at which the jobs they provide in greater numbers than any other sector of our economy have been disappearing.

However, what we also see in this budget is a deliberate attempt, as we have seen over the years with this government, to stifle the voices of those who stand up for those who are living in increasing misery as a result of the actions of this government. We do see a cutback in funding to organizations for women, funding to organizations for aboriginal people and funding to organizations for the unemployed in this budget. However, if this government believes that stifling the voices of protest is going to get it re-elected it is dramatically mistaken. Those voices are out there and are powerful. Those voices are out there waiting to elect a new government.

This budget is hypocritical and contradictory. It blames the world situation for the misery in Canada right now. That is really easy. If the government blames the rest of the world it does not have to do anything about the problem, does it? It can pretend that it is somebody else's fault, hide its head under the blanket and pretend that it will go away when somebody else does something about it.