

The Government says that it wants to trim its sails. We were doing the same thing and we had a deficit reduction plan that was on the same track.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Axworthy: They laugh. The fact of the matter is that our formula was working as well as theirs.

Mr. Dick: You did not convince the Canadian people.

Mr. Axworthy: It was just as important because we set the ground work for economic recovery in this country. We brought the inflation rate down to 4 per cent or 5 per cent. That began to happen under our Government because of our initiatives. The fact is that the Conservatives can take advantage of it, but they should be on their knees every day thanking God and the Liberals for helping to create economic recovery in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dick: Do you think anyone believes you?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions or comments?

Mr. Dick: If the Liberal Party was doing such a magnificent job in lowering inflation and reducing the deficit, why did the Canadian people not believe the Liberals when they tried to sell their great plan in the summer of 1984? They kicked you out and elected the biggest majority in history.

Mr. Axworthy: If the Hon. Member is going to use that as an indicator, I would simply ask him, if he is doing such a wonderful job, why has the percentage of popular support for his Party fallen from 58 per cent to 37 per cent in two years? That has been the most precipitous drop in public opinion of any Government in the history of Canada. If the Member is typical of most Tories, who simply gauge the effectiveness of their policies by public opinion polls, I suggest he should be far more concerned about what his Government is doing and should vote against this legislation. It is legislation like this that has provided that major drop in support of his Government after only two years.

Mr. Kaplan: The Hon. Member referred to the construction of the National Research Council in Winnipeg. What were the Conservatives saying about that during the last election campaign, while construction was still going on? Did they indicate that they would shut it down if they were elected, or did they indicate that they would do something for science? We know what the Conservatives ultimately did for science.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting question which perhaps relates to the previous question. The Conservatives made many promises. However, the closing down of the NRC was never mentioned. In fact, several Conservative candidates with whom I debated, with some success at the time, were saying that they supported that initiative. They

thought it was wonderful that a city in western Canada would be given the opportunity to move into a new high-technology age. They endorsed the concept that all the regions of Canada should share equally in the development of new high-technology.

When that decision was made in November, 1984 it came as a tremendous shock to the people of that province. They realized that our chance to move into a new age of high-technology was stopped suddenly and dramatically short by a short-sighted Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The period for questions and comments has terminated. Debate.

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that you were able to recognize me. I understand that it might cause considerable eye strain to see from one end of the room to the other, being so far away.

The subject of Bill C-96 is not only worthy of debate, it is worthy of prolonged debate. On the one hand it concerns the very heart of social expenditures in Canada, expenditures on health and education, while on the other hand it goes to the way Canada ought to arrange its national finances. Therefore, the subject matter has been worthy of prolonged debate, and the Government has seen to it that there has been adequate opportunity for that debate. The time comes when constructive criticism degenerates into mindless opposition. That is what we have seen happen over the last few days. For that reason, it was necessary, by means of time allocation, to put the Opposition out of its misery, so to speak.

We have witnessed peculiar spectacles in the House over the last couple of days. We have seen a contest between the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin) and the Hon. Member for York South-Weston (Mr. Nunziata) as to who could use up the most parliamentary time and do a better job at preventing Parliament from doing the legitimate job for which it was elected. I believe that one Member spoke for two and a half hours while the other spoke for some three hours, saying absolutely nothing during the whole period. As parliamentarians, we cannot countenance that type of negative activity.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Government this afternoon and to set the record straight. I will deal with the truth, which I know is a rather alien concept for some Members opposite. However, that is what I intend to do this afternoon, because we have heard much from the other side and not nearly enough from the Government side.

The intent of Bill C-96 is to preserve the integrity of the system of health and education funding in Canada. When one considers the financial mess left by the previous Government, it will become evident that it put the whole social system in jeopardy. Were we to continue along the same road as the previous Government, making expenditures that were much greater than revenues, building up a greater debt and having to devote a much greater proportion of revenues to interest