

Government Orders

Some people have said it in the House today: Bill C-32 is a bad bill at a bad time. The evidence of Tory negligence is all around us. I have mentioned the 1.4 million unemployed, I mentioned the 2.2 million on welfare and the more than 1 million children in this country living under the poverty line at this time. We could go on and on bringing forth these very sad situations.

In my view and in the view of my colleagues on this side, the government should let this bill die, acknowledge its disastrous effect and forget about it. We will see. It does not want to debate it. We will see what it will do. Its members do not want to debate it, but maybe they will have the guts to sit down in their places and not vote for it. That will defeat the damn thing.

We recently were given a presentation by the premier of Ontario on TV announcing the terrible news in this province. He said that the recession had cost thousands of Ontarians their jobs, more job losses are likely still to come. This recession brought on and worsened by Tory policies has forced the Ontario government to cut the increase in grants this year to hospitals, municipalities, school boards and universities to 1 per cent. In real terms with inflation factored in, this means job losses and a drop in the quality of service that these institutions offer.

This week the Ottawa region, my region, has had reports of cuts in regional and municipal budgets which would affect programs that help the poorest in our communities. The cut in provincial transfers is estimated to cost Ottawa-Carleton people \$50 million to \$60 million this year alone just to maintain. It is not to improve, but just to maintain the services.

In September last when I spoke on Bill C-32, the economic situation in this region was terrible. Today, it is even worse. Optimists—there are still a few around—predict an economic turnaround will possibly begin half way through this year. This Tory government blindly pursues this legislation to put a cap on the Canada Assistance Plan at a time when it is forcing more and more Canadians to turn to such assistance.

I will give some stats on that.

One in ten Ontario residents is out of work. The number of long-term unemployed, those who are unemployed for six months, is expected to exceed 121,000, higher than the 1981-82 recession.

The unemployment rate in Ontario now is 9.7 per cent and not expected to drop below 8 per cent until at least the end of 1995, according to the Ontario treasurer. The number of unemployed in Ontario has risen from 331,000 in 1990 to 506,000 in 1991. Ontario has 40 per cent of the 1,100 manufacturing bankruptcies in Canada during the last year. Ontario corporate pre-tax profits are expected to have a decline of almost 30 per cent in 1991 while retail sales are expected to drop by 7 per cent.

The January 1992 issue of the *Canadian Economic Observer* shows that business bankruptcies in Ontario increased from 181,128 in October to 362,138 in November, the most recent month for which statistics are available.

I could go on and on and show the economic distress we are in. The staggering statistics have been provided.

I want to end my comments because I know my friend from Thunder Bay—Nipigon wants to make some remarks tonight and I want to give him a chance to get on the debate. On this side, we have a lot of members who want to speak. We are going to have to share our time so that we can all get on. I understand our concerns, but I cannot understand or accept that silence over there. The members of that Tory government fail to want to debate this important bill.

Therefore, in closing, may I just say that to place a cap on the Canada Assistance Plan is to jeopardize its effectiveness, its ability to help the poorest Canadians, wherever they live.

As the National Council on Welfare remarked in its report earlier this year, the Tories are imposing a limit on a program that was designed to be flexible enough to protect those with no other recourse for assistance. The council is also worried that this cap could postpone long overdue reforms to the welfare system to make it work better.

Confidence in this government is low. I can understand that. Everywhere they turn, Canadians witness and experience the painful fallout of Tory government policies.

For this government, the passage of Bill C-32 may be an objective. It may represent another landmark or checkmark for it. For us it is nothing but right wing agenda for the destruction of Canada as we know it. For Canadians, passage of Bill C-32 will be a sad event.