

*Government Orders*

economic policy and social policy. Unless they are working hand in hand, we are not going to be able to redevelop the country that we were once so proud of. It is very important that we all recognize the significance and the imperative of integrating the two objectives of social justice and economic development.

For us on this side of the House, social policy has always represented an essential component of what we try to do as government. If the message from 60 years of Liberal government is that we have best represented the whole nation, that we have best articulated national values, aspirations and purpose, then that is why social policy has been so fundamental to the way we have governed in the past. In order to make ourselves a society distinct from the United States, and without being negative in the nationalism but being proud of Canada, surely the social infrastructure that we set out, the best example being medicare, is the way that we have challenged people to see Canada a different and a better place to live.

That is why we have opposed this government's strategy of integrating the two economies in North America without having a social policy agenda. That is why in many respects the strategy of the Europeans in integrating their economies is more forward looking and more helpful to all people. That is to say, they recognize there is a social side to the coin and that what they should be doing is making sure that workers are looked after properly and that families are looked after. The fact that there is no social policy in the original FTA with the United States, and it does not sound like there will be one in the future with Mexico, is the reason why this party, a party traditionally of free trade, has been so upset with the ramifications of the 1988-89 free trade agreement with the United States.

The Conservatives by contrast have never known what to do. On the economic side, and it is very interesting to think about this, their regimes parallel three major collapses in the Canadian economy: 1930, 1960 and 1990. In the two major constitutional crises—in the early 1960s when the FLQ began to develop a base in Quebec; and in 1990, in this recent constitutional crisis, through 1992—the Conservatives were in charge.

On the other hand, if you look at the economic issues of the NDP and the experience we have had in the west, the collapse of the Manitoba economy from 1970 runs parallel to the NDP government taking power in 1969.

The decline of the Saskatchewan economy is very much parallel to the NDP being the government there. All the headlines indicate the panic that is riveting throughout the Ontario economy with the NDP in charge. It has only been the Liberal Party which over the years has been able to maintain an economic growth rate which has allowed the federal government to support provinces directly and to build up a base of expenditures, not indebtedness, which have created the social consensus which has kept this country together. This is why the Liberals have fought this piece of legislation with such determination.

The reason we are having such great difficulty putting the Constitution together right now is the fact that people do not see that this consensus and this coalition to do things, both on the social and the economic side, is no longer there.

In many areas, instead of cutbacks, we could be reforming. We would advocate during this session in the House and through the budget that the government begin to look at ways of supporting Canadians instead of ways of undermining their support systems. We could be doing more in areas such as income support, child care, health care, settlement policies, English as a second language, French as a second language, immigration, fair taxation, skills training, housing, post-secondary education, regional economic development and greater support for small businesses and entrepreneurship.

With the emergence of such a program, we would begin to see Canadians being more confident in their government and therefore beginning to make investment decisions on their own, whether as consumers or investors on the business side.

Since 1984, by contrast, the Conservative government has ignored the undeniable link between social and economic policy and made deficit reduction the top priority of the government.

The cumulative effect of the policy direction taken by this myopic government has been devastating for many Canadians. The result has been high unemployment, drastic increases in poverty levels and skyrocketing welfare rolls, a near bankrupt economy, little reduction in the deficit and, most important, little hope for a turnaround in the future.

The Conservative agenda has failed to achieve its stated goal of deficit and debt reduction. Over the past seven years, in spite of successive tax increases for low and middle income Canadians—the same Canadians