

Government Orders

When we as the Liberal Party lost the election in 1984, there were 28 ministers in the government. Since 1984 that number has climbed to over 40. Of course, when you raise the number of ministers you raise all the expenses of government.

• (1610)

An hon. member: Like the limousines.

Mr. Keyes: Like the limousines.

An hon. member: Two ministers for every department.

Mr. Keyes: Yes, two ministers for every department.

We went through some healthy economic times in 1985, 1986 and 1987. When the times were good did this government take a second and say: "Well, listen, the times are good. Like many Canadians living at home, when times are good we had better sock away a little bit into an emergency fund, or maybe we should have another look at this national debt of \$180 billion and better start paying it down, because it is only going to grow and especially if inflation gets away from us in the future we will be able to pay it down". But that did not happen.

Today Canada has inherited from this government that has been sitting on that side of the House since 1984 a debt that has gone from \$180 billion to over \$400 billion. "Interest rates," it cries, "interest rates".

The Conservatives set the economic agenda. They set the fiscal and economic policy for this country. They are the ones who created the problem and the financial mess we are in today.

The government has not eliminated the deficit as it said it would do but has instead doubled the national debt, as I have said, to \$400 billion. Tory cabinet ministers maintain they are merely servicing the debt incurred by the former government, but is it not about time that they accepted responsibility for the fiscal mess which they have put this country in, the responsibilities and decisions they have made since 1984?

In this whole notion of capitalism as the way of the future—and it is such a smashing success—some like to point to the United States as the leader of that capitalistic order. I have to ask myself, and my constituents ask themselves at home: "Why are millions of Americans living in abject poverty, in ghettos teaming with people

who have fallen through the cracks so fast?" It is because the safety net is so thin.

My colleague from the riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell likes to quote from a book. I have got one for him. In a new book entitled *The Quick and the Dead—Brian Mulroney, Big Business and the Seduction of Canada*, Linda McQuaig writes that top Tory officials privately admit that the Prime Minister and his government are intent on dismantling Canada's prized social safety net in favour of the open-ended, *laissez-faire*, rough and tumble, cutthroat world that we see just south of our border.

It has been mentioned in this House before, that the cornerstone of that plan was the free trade agreement between Canada and the U.S. What the Prime Minister and the Conservative government failed to realize was that such a free trade agreement would mean one of two things. First, Canada would immediately rush into the U.S. market and swallow up entire sections of businesses becoming global giants. Second, Canadian companies would drop like flies because labour costs and material costs and taxation were so low in the United States that they would either not be able to compete and would be forced out of business or else they would take it upon themselves to move to the U.S. where the cost of doing business is cheaper.

We are seeing that happening every day. Near our riding of Hamilton West Triton is gone. In a community where I used to work, Barrie, Ontario, General Tire, what did they spend? They spent \$45 million upgrading that plant. They are going to make the tires at the parent company in the United States. After nearly 300,000 Canadians have lost their jobs since the free trade deal was struck, the Prime Minister has announced a new campaign for competitiveness.

The former Minister of Finance, let us call him the former minister of financial disaster, has been asked to take on this task. Work shops, position papers, programs, all will be created for us so that we may be competitive.

The result of this nearsightedness is that the statistical sheets are all covered in red ink. In the world-wide recession of 1982 there were 32,000 bankruptcies in Canada. In the latest made-in-Canada recession, a recession made by this government, there were 42,782 bankruptcies in Canada in 1990, a 50 per cent increase over 1989.