

Government Orders

With respect to trade this government has probably done more in that area in a short period of time than any other government in the history of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi, BQ): Madam Speaker, let me go back to what the hon. parliamentary secretary said at the beginning of his speech, namely that it must be recognized that the reform under way is aimed at reducing the debt and the deficit. I do not want to repeat the figures, but he admitted that this reform was a total package in relation to the existing economic situation.

He confirmed that the debt and the deficit will be reduced at the expense of the less fortunate, that is, the seasonally unemployed, students—some of whom we saw last week on Parliament Hill—, single mothers, high school drop-outs, to whom he also referred in his undoubtedly accurate figures. It is true that over 33 per cent of our students drop out of school. We must of course put our fiscal house in order before it goes bankrupt, but not at the expense of the less fortunate.

I wish he had mentioned other ways to reduce the deficit. There are other ways such as family trusts, to name just one. What is keeping them from taking action on this front? What is keeping them from going after the millions of dollars we are losing because the GST is poorly administered? We could then achieve the same goal, that is, reducing the debt and the deficit, but not at the expense of the less fortunate.

• (1645)

Mr. Harb: Madam Speaker, I would like us to reread the "blues". I never said that all this government wanted to do is to reduce the deficit on the backs of the poor. On the contrary, I will again repeat what I said, in case the hon. member did not hear me. We will continue to set up and launch the necessary programs to help Canadians. Let me quote what the minister said in English:

[*English*]

"A hallmark of our Canadian society is our commitment as a government to people who cannot work because of illness or injury, low income families struggling to make ends meet, people with disabilities or chronic illness and children living in poverty. Our social programs are the way in which we offer protection and hope to Canadians". He goes on to list some of the social programs that we have in place.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, the minister is dealing with the needs of people who ask for help.

I especially want to point out to the hon. member that I never said in my speech that we would reduce the deficit on the backs

of the poor. I am sure he agrees with me that we must control the deficit. To control the deficit, we must act more intelligently. If the hon. member tells me that \$50 billion a year is not enough spent on education, well, I do not know, but we spend more than any other country in the world.

Probably what we need in the end is to harmonize the systems, eliminate duplication and deliver services better, and I am sure that we will end up saving money, but never on the backs of the poor and those who need assistance.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I have a number of areas that I wanted to touch on but I keep adding as I listen to this debate here today.

One of the areas that I would like to touch on briefly are the comments made by the hon. member for Broadview—Greenwood. I listened with interest to his heart warming and somewhat inspiring story of his grandmother. I believe that many people have similar stories. It does show what people are able to do under adverse conditions when the need is really there.

One of the interesting things is that we have gone too far. I think the pendulum has swung the other way. I do not think we want to return to conditions under which he mentioned where there is absolutely no help for anyone under virtually any circumstances. It is very warming that his grandmother was able to persevere in the face of that kind of adversity.

Nowadays we have a different situation. I have one friend as an example who has a son who plants trees. This may be alien to some of the people in some regions of the country but in British Columbia tree planting is a very active profession during the summer months. Someone who is a good tree planter can make a great deal of money during that season; \$35,000, \$40,000 or more in a three or four month season for those who are very good at this. It happens that his son is one of these who is very good at what he does and he makes very good money.

During the balance of the year under the existing system he collects unemployment insurance. When I talk in terms of the pendulum swinging too far the other way, this particular individual belongs to something that is known in my riding with some satire, with tongue firmly in cheek, as the UIC ski team. He is an avid skier. This particular individual spends a lot of time at the local ski hill and to his credit volunteers a lot of his time to the voluntary ski patrol which is very worthwhile.

The interesting story that his father conveyed to me is the fact that this individual one season was offered a job at the mountain to be on the regular ski patrol and to be paid for it. He went home that night and pondered his situation. He looked at his UIC benefits and looked at what he would be paid as a member of the ski patrol.