

Government Orders

• (1700)

Two years ago, when inflation was at at 5.5 per cent or 6 per cent, Dr. Crow decided that we could not have that and that he, as the central banker, had to enhance his image with all of those international casino players. Therefore, he was going to make sure that inflation was wrestled to the ground. What we saw was interest rates going up and up and up. As they went up, unemployment went up in the country. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada at that time said that it was a made-in-Canada recession.

An hon. member: That is right.

Mr. Rodriguez: You all remember that. Have we forgotten, Mr. Speaker?

An hon. member: A Tory concession.

Mr. Rodriguez: Here we have a government at the national level that had its hands on the levers of fiscal and monetary policy, yet the people from whom it got the revenues reside in the provinces and who get their services directly from those provinces, services for health care, for education and social assistance. These are operated by the provinces. Here we had the federal government taking action. Of course, the end result was that in fact we had all of those people falling on to unemployment insurance.

Then this government, to put salt into the wounds, brought in changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act, Bill C-21. I do not have to remind too many members in this House of that bill. My colleague fought this so hard, the member for Timmins—Chapleau sitting here to my right. The act turned over the funding of unemployment insurance to the employers and employees totally. To put further salt into the wounds, this government decided to take the training funds out of the unemployment insurance program.

The government then pats itself on the back, puffs up its chest and says: "Look, on our operating accounts we run a surplus". Last year it ran a surplus of \$11 billion. The federal government, a little known fact, took in \$12 billion more than it spent on the operating year over year accounts. But because of the deliberate high interest rate policy that was followed by this government, the Sumo wrestlers of the world, that had to wrestle inflation to the ground, which is down now to 1.7 per cent, the patient is in a coma.

An hon. member: 1.5 million unemployed.

Mr. Rodriguez: What is the price? We said this to Mr. Crow. He thought he was J.C. He came before the committee and we said to J.C.: "Is your conscience not bothering you? How can you sleep at nights knowing that you have so successfully defeated inflation, but you have got 1.5 million people unemployed in this country?"

With the cutbacks in unemployment insurance where do you think those people are now ending up? They are ending up on the welfare rolls—

Some hon. members: Of the provinces.

Mr. Rodriguez: Of the provinces. Thanks for reminding me, brother. On the provinces. What does the government do? It turns around, this gang over here, heartless and cruel—

An hon. member: Soulless.

Mr. Rodriguez: —soulless. This heartless, soulless and cruel government turns around and blames the victims for this pickle that it is in when it is all made over there. It is a made in Toryland recipe. That is where it has been made and now the Tories are saying to Bob Rae: "You are spending too much".

In this country, there are two million people living on social assistance. There are 2 million people living on social assistance, and they are saying that the governments at the provincial level are spending too much. They are spending too much.

I want to put things in proper perspective. I know my good friend from northern Ontario to my right is there, but I have to say it. They actually blame the Ontario government. Who is it who got us into things in Ontario like the Dome? I thought that was something that the private sector ought to build, but Billy Davis on the board of directors and Howard Starkman and all these guys, they wanted the Dome.

Who was going to build and pay for the Dome? The taxpayers of Ontario. Ontario now is left with this white elephant called a Dome, and it is now backing out of the deal it had just signed to buy the thing.

Who got us into buying Suncor shares that are not worth a pinch of coon snuff today? Billy Davis, the Tory premier got us into Suncor. We cannot even sell those shares today and help pay down the debt. They are not worth a pinch of coon snuff.