

Supply

Mr. Ron Fisher (Saskatoon—Dundurn): Mr. Speaker, the member for Chambly and I are splitting the time.

I am pleased to be involved in the debate today on the opposition day's motion which says:

That this House condemns the government for its policies that have stifled economic growth, destroyed Canadian jobs and exacerbated the recession.

• (1305)

It probably should have read depression, but it is a good start. It certainly is descriptive of the problem we find ourselves facing.

I would like to address some of the things brought in by this government which my party and I consider to have been so devastating: the free trade agreement, the proposed North American free trade agreement, deregulation, privatization and changes to unemployment insurance, not one devastating change but at least two of them. I should mention the off-loading on to the provinces. I will not go into all the ramifications of that, as well as the GST.

Certainly there have been clawbacks. I do not suppose there will be time to go into those in any great depth but there were the clawbacks of the seniors' pensions and the changes to family allowances for children just in case I do not get back to that topic. It certainly has crossed my mind to wonder why the government has to try to correct Canada's economic problems—and we will get to the source of those as well in a moment—on the backs of children and seniors.

I think I heard the Minister of State for Finance and Privatization say that for the most part what the government did was implement many of the proposals in the Macdonald royal commission which was set up originally by the Liberals. He was berating the Liberals for not having taken cognizance of what the commission that they themselves set up proposed for the country.

I would like to point out that in the context of the Macdonald royal commission, the then national director of the United Steel Workers of America was the co-chair and the director of the union to which I still belong and with which I was involved for quite some time, issued a minority report on that commission. I think that is important.

I also believe that I heard the Minister of State for Finance and Privatization quote an article from what he

referred to as the "red paper". I think that is *The Toronto Star*. Being from the hinterland of Saskatchewan I am not too familiar with the eastern newspapers. *The Toronto Star* said that the seeds of disaster which confront Canada originated in 1975. I certainly would concur with that because of course the problems facing this country started under the Liberals and as the Minister of State for Finance and Privatization has admitted, continued under the Liberal-sponsored royal commission into their administration.

They do seem to have a certain affinity for each other. I noticed just a while ago we had a Question Period which I think could be described as a truce. Certainly the amount of heckling that went back and forth between those two parties subsided considerably. I think that was out of respect for each other's potential embarrassment if they got into too deep a discussion of any of the issues.

In the province of Saskatchewan since the free trade agreement came in—I will not go into all of these—in the goods producing industries there has been a decrease of 17 per cent in the jobs available; in the mining, quarrying and oil industry a decrease of 17 per cent; in manufacturing it has been 16.5 per cent; in durable goods there has been a decrease of 27 per cent; in the production of beverages—this goes into the aspect of how interprovincially the free trade agreement has affected trade within Canada—the decrease has been 36 per cent and in building, development and general contracting there has been a reduction of almost 40 per cent. The list goes on and on.

I would like to point out that the government spent millions of dollars in media advertising trying to convince Canadians that the free trade agreement was so good. It spent almost \$2 million on radio commercials and almost \$1.5 million on a brochure which it sent to every household in the country. The tabloid told us that free trade had boosted exports, created jobs and helped cushion the recession. What it did not tell us was that an additional 600,000 Canadians had joined the official unemployment rolls since January 1989 and that the unemployment rate had risen from 7.6 per cent to 11 per cent or 1.6 million in total. In Saskatchewan the unemployment rate since free trade came in has gone from 7.4 per cent to 9.1 per cent. The tabloid did not tell us that bankruptcies had increased as much as they had.