

Canadian Economy

We can also examine the record in terms of the question period to see what has happened to it in the past eight or ten years. If we go back to the days when the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) was prime minister—great days for this country—we find that the question period was very democratic. Questions were put and answered for as long as there were questions to be put. As soon as the government changed and the late Lester Pearson took over, time limits were placed on the question period. The government of that day knew very well the kind of damage that could be done to a government with an uncontrolled and prolonged question period and they wanted none of that. One of the first things they did was to limit the time spent on questions.

Following the 1968 election, another step was taken because the question period was still hurting a little. The present Prime Minister took it one step further: he withdrew one third or one-half of his ministers from the House of Commons during the question period and ministers attended only two or three times a week. If you consider the earnings of those fellows, they should have been able to fulfil their services in the House a little more freely. That, of course, gave the government more protection from the question period. However, it also created a great deal of public discontent about the attitude of the government, and they have since reversed that policy. Much more recently, in this very parliament, there was a greater shortening of the question period. If we give these matters a little thought, it can easily be seen that democracy is indeed being eroded in this institution of parliament.

If one looks around and talks to people in various parts of the country, one finds a good deal of concern about the direction of this government. It has been designed to slowly, but surely, steer the course of our economic system away from the traditional concept of private enterprise, private ownership and open competition in the marketplace.

We have seen a proliferation of certain Crown corporations. We have seen a number of changes in tax and other policies which have seriously threatened certain industry which previously had been operated satisfactorily and efficiently by private enterprise. I refer in particular to the petroleum industry. Not too long ago we did not even think of the possibility of a shortage in this area or of not being self-sufficient. Over the past three years or so there has been a sudden desire by this government to change the economic climate, to change the tax system and to make sudden and frequent changes in petroleum policy. This has created instability in the petroleum industry and has led to decreased productivity, exploration and development. This country is now in the position where we face the very real possibility of being almost totally dependent on offshore sources within the next decade or so.

There have been further programs of great extravagance which typify this government. They appear to be designed with political expediency in mind. They are designed to buy the taxpayers' vote with the taxpayers' own money. As an example I would refer to Petro-Can which is going to—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Yewchuk: Hon. members do not like to hear the truth. Those who are interjecting would have a very difficult

[Mr. Yewchuk.]

time trying to show that there is any real need for the institution known as Petro-Can. We had a long debate on that. It will cost the people of Canada \$1.5 billion, yet there has never been any kind of justification placed before this House to show the slightest need for it. Indeed, it appears to be simply a stop to the socialists in our society.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

● (1540)

Mr. Yewchuk: I hear the socialists groaning. I am cognizant of the fact that when the vote was taken, they were glad to support it. It is a continuation of the unofficial marriage which originated during the minority government and still seems to be in effect.

I was talking about extravagance. This can be easily demonstrated. In 1968, when I first became a member of this House, the total budget of the federal government was less than \$11 billion—in the vicinity of \$10.8 billion. It has tripled in the short space of seven years. Can you imagine anything more shameful, or anything which contributes to inflation to a greater extent than that kind of uncontrolled extravagance?

Mr. Nystrom: What happened in Alberta?

Mr. Yewchuk: One of the members of the New Democratic Party asks what happened in Alberta. The fact is that the Alberta budget has performed much more satisfactorily.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Oh, sure. You say that with a big smile on your face.

Mr. Yewchuk: Much more satisfactorily than that of the federal government or, indeed, than that of British Columbia or Manitoba where the socialists have been in charge.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Now you're talking.

Mr. Yewchuk: In the case of British Columbia, they have nearly made the province bankrupt in the space of three years, and now they are asking the people to give them another three years in which to complete the process.

One of the things which has upset me most about the present administration is the attitude it has created toward the concept of work. Each of us can think of times when the Prime Minister has scoffed at the idea that people in this country need to work in order to make a living. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) is devoting almost all his energy to bringing in what he will call a guaranteed annual income, a program which in effect says to the people of Canada, "You do not have to work any more; you can live off the guaranteed income".

This is an attitude which has led to our present decline in productivity. It has led to the concept that if you work it right, you can get more out of this country and out of the economy than you put into it. It is an attitude which covers a great deal of territory, including such programs as LIP designed with political expediency in mind. The only way to change this state of affairs would be to throw out of