

Mr. Yewchuk: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I did not raise my point of order earlier because I wanted to expedite the question period. In his response to me the Prime Minister suggested that I was a self-appointed spokesman for the west. That was an erroneous statement. I was appointed by the constituents of Athabasca.

● (1530)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: I apologize to the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert), but I shall give him tomorrow the opportunity to ask the very important question which he doubtless intended to ask today; therefore, I shall recognize him during the question period.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

PROVISION FOR QUARTERLY ADJUSTMENT OF PENSION

The House resumed, from Wednesday, September 5, consideration in committee of Bill C-219, to amend the Old Age Security Act—Mr. Lalonde—Mr. McCleave in the chair.

On clause 1—“Consumer Price Index”.

[Translation]

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Chairman, Bill C-219, to amend the Old Age Security Act, now under consideration, is evidence that a bill can very well go through first, second and third reading in committee of the whole without being referred to a House committee. It is evidence that when the government wants to have a bill dealt with in a hurry, it is the first one to admit the inefficiency of committees of the House, because on account of the government control over these committees, the consideration of bills in these same committees has nearly never changed much to the original version of a bill. That is why almost all members are convinced that these committees are inefficient.

However, I appreciate this method of considering bills in committee of the whole, because it enables us to offer suggestions and move amendments.

This Bill C-219 to amend the Old Age Security Act has a praiseworthy intent in itself, but when put into practice it will be seen clearly that it is not the true solution to the problems of inflation and insecurity, because this bill will not solve the problem of inflation any more than all the other statements of the ministers, and specifically those of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), in view of all the false solutions that have been put to us so far.

On June 8, 1970, the federal government declared war on inflation through its then Minister of Finance, Mr. Benson, and after that through other ministers who have made similar statements that they were going to stop inflation.

Today, the legislation on old age security, providing especially for a quarterly adjustment of old age security

Old Age Security

pensions to the cost of living, is tangible proof that the government has completely failed in its efforts to curb inflation. The government, through its Minister of Finance, announced with fifes and drums on June 8, 1970, that it would conquer inflation. It was fantastic, on June 8, 1970, to hear the cabinet ministers, and especially the then Minister of Finance, strongly and enthusiastically announce that the government would fight against and conquer inflation.

If I may, Mr. Chairman, I should like to refer to the very speech made by the hon. Minister of Finance, as reported on page 7817 of *Hansard* for June 8, 1970. I quote:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to report to the House on the meeting of the Federal-Provincial Committee of Ministers of Finance and Provincial Treasurers in Winnipeg last Friday and Saturday.

There were some significant developments during the course of this conference which have an important bearing on current economic conditions in Canada and which I would like to outline in some detail for the information of hon. members.

In my remarks to the conference regarding the economic situation, I reminded provincial ministers that the fundamental objective of the federal government is to halt the inflationary spiral of costs and prices in order to pave the way for a return to the path of strong but stable growth.

Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance claimed that it was dramatic for Canada to announce to the Canadian public that the government had decided to conquer inflation. He further stated, and I quote:

I want to make it perfectly clear that the federal government remains determined to break the back of inflation. We are hopeful that this further measure will prove effective, together with existing policies, in halting the cost-price spiral.

In September 1973, the government's drum against inflation is smashed in. It is not even heard any longer. The government has lamentably failed, unfortunately, in its Robin Hood fight against inflation. After hearing so much noise against inflation, many Canadians thought that the government had a really big gun to fight it, but today we realize that it was not even a slingshot.

The government has failed pathetically against inflation and the bill now under consideration admits; we have failed. We have failed to check inflation and we are now going to try to follow it. We do not know where it will lead us. We do not know where it is heading, but we are following it just the same. The government undertakes to lengthen every three months the scale of inflation by adjusting old age pensions to the inflation rate. At the present time, the government does not know what is the scale of inflation, but it is still ready to jump on it. The government is proving today that it did not know where it was going on June 8, 1970, that it does not know yet where it is going as concerns inflation, but it is still trying to go every which way.

Mr. Chairman, for the benefit of my hon. colleagues, I would like to repeat what I said on that date in this House on behalf of my party, in reply to a statement made by the Minister of Finance of the time concerning inflation. I quote from page 7822 of *Hansard*:

Mr. Speaker, we are quite willing to see the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) and the government take steps to fight inflation and we recognize that the minister is sincere when he talks about his anti-inflation policy, but we have serious doubts as to the means he is taking to attain that goal.