

restrain spending. In the estimates I notice that repairs to the East Block, where the Prime Minister's offices are located, cost \$7,950,000. You can build a good office building from scratch for something like \$8 million. I doubt whether these remodelled offices will cause the work done in them to be one bit more efficient or satisfactory than in the past.

● (1730)

I know a lot of accommodation is needed for the extra million dollars, staff and lackeys that we have found in this department recently, but surely that is an excessive amount. The tax cut which we had asked for during the debate on Bill C-49 would have helped cut the government's income considerably and perhaps cut off some of the major spending programs that are being put before us in the estimates today.

The House leader went on at some length to talk of the wide ranging measures that are being undertaken by the government. I think the worst example yet is the Post Office. The level of service of this department has never been worse, and no one really knows what the costs of the post office department are going to be. Let me quote some of the costs that I have been watching in the estimates, again of the public works department. The postal terminal in Saint John, New Brunswick, was originally estimated at \$5 million; now it is up to \$8.6 million, an increase of 72 per cent. Another one in St. John's, Newfoundland, has climbed from \$3.7 million to \$7.7 million, an increase of 110 per cent. The Halifax, Nova Scotia, mail processing plant cost has climbed by 186 per cent. The best example of all is that the Montreal map program cost has climbed by some 300 per cent.

The impact of these figures is absolutely phenomenal. How can anyone possibly claim that the department is seriously fighting inflation when costs are allowed in one year to escalate by 300 per cent? We have heard a lot of talk about consensus. We have had the promises in the Speech from the Throne. I suggest to the House that perhaps consensus is not necessary any more, that it is too late. Perhaps it is time for leadership and firm action.

I am absolutely opposed to the last part of the motion before the House today.

I should like to comment briefly for a moment on some food items, including one item that is of particular importance in my part of the country. I refer to milk and the industrial milk program. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) promised the farmers of this country an answer on the support price for milk well ahead of the April 1 deadline. I asked the minister this afternoon when he was going to bring out this new price level, and he very flippantly answered "soon". That just will not do.

There is only one week left for the minister to make an announcement. Surely someone in his department, in the dairy commission, or in treasury board has some idea what the farmers are going to receive for milk this coming year. If they have, why cannot we be told? If they have no idea—and this may be the case—it is some indication of the type of leadership we have been getting.

My guess is that we will probably find out what the support price for milk is during the recess, when the minister will be able to get away with not tabling the

Inflation

document in an open House but will be able to slip it in quietly with the press releases for which he is so famous, hoping that it will be forgotten before we return. Let me tell him that this is one member who will be watching very carefully for the announcement, and there are a lot of farmers in my riding who will also be looking forward to it.

We are all faced with shortages of food. The cost of food is very high, but no problem is as bad as the one the farmers will face if they cannot get a decent price for their food and, as a result, no food is put on the market. I am not preaching doom and gloom, as has been suggested, but in my riding there are still many young men and women who want to get into the business of farming and who are capable of becoming good farmers, and because of the high cost they require some assistance.

There is supposed to be a federal farm program to help young people who want to become farmers. The ARDA program is designed with that in mind, as well as the farm credit program. Yet this program is operating on the basis of land values that are ten years old. The program has never been updated, and there is no way it can ever help a young farmer in view of the cost levels that we have today. The Department of Agriculture refuses to upgrade the stipulated costs, and I have a very strong suspicion that this is the sort of measure it would like to hold off on until the Ontario government has held its election, simply because the government feels it can embarrass a few people in this way. The federal government is stonewalling young farmers who want to get into farming.

I would love to support the first half of my hon. friend's motion, Madam Speaker, but because of the incredulous nonsense in the last few lines I find I cannot support it, and tonight at 9.45 I, together with many of my colleagues, will have an opportunity of voting it down.

Mr. James Gillies (Don Valley): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to participate in this debate this afternoon, and I congratulate the members of the Creditiste party for bringing the motion forward. I, too, agree with the remarks just made by my colleague. We are pleased to support the first half of the motion, but unfortunately do not agree with the last half and so therefore will vote against it.

It is very important that parliament concern itself with inflation on a continuing and constant basis because of what has happened in this country. I blame the government very much for the situation. The hon. member for Mississauga (Mr. Abbott) by his remarks shows that we have become a nation that is willing to rationalize about the problems we face. We are pretending that they are not here, that they are going away, and so we do not have to do anything about them.

The fact of the matter is that during the last two or three years major mistakes have been made in economic policymaking. The last three budgets in this country were supposed to solve inflation by increasing supply. It is impossible to increase supply and consumption at the same time, and yet this is what the government tried. The situation is analagous to the period when Lyndon Johnson of the United States said his country could have guns and butter at the same time. You cannot take more from the