

*Economic Conditions*

going to do. That is why the Canadian people tonight look at this government and wonder about it. Canadians must wonder about what they did.

Someone asked what significance the energy debate had. I am speaking of the energy issue which arose in the government's budget. What was the significance of it? The significance is that the energy package contained in that budget is a massive blunder. The Minister of Energy, Mine and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) can yell and shout all he wants. In the energy sector in Canada, investment has been frightened and some of it frightened away. In other sectors of the economy there is the same concern as a result of the policies of this government.

I ask my friends what that means in terms of jobs for Canadians in Quebec or Ontario, aside from western Canada. There is an excuse made by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that perhaps rigs are not leaving at quite the high rate some would allege. We only got the budget in October; give it a chance. Those rigs will go. Why shouldn't they go? Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Evans) stay or would he go elsewhere if he were faced with a government policy which was anathema to his business and did not take into account certain important aspects of his commercial affairs? He would be the first back across the border if that were the case.

The dollar is down. As a result of the policies of this government, which have not been improved by the budget, according to every economic indicator, we are at the brink of economic disaster in Canada.

● (2350)

I am not suggesting that the situation is irretrievable, because it is not. Despite the government, this country is reasonably wealthy, strong and healthy. However, we cannot blunder on in the same direction and improve its health or maintain it. That is why the misguided energy policy of the government must be changed. The budgetary policy is wrong and it, too, will have to be changed.

The government will have to move to protect lower middle and lower-income Canadians with respect to these policies. They will have to be changed and new ones brought in. I can honestly say I do not think the Minister of Finance is doing his job. I say this with some regret. The minister is not doing his job if he blames our problems on the Americans or someone else. Some may ask what this government is supposed to do. That is the dilemma we face. The words of the motion we are debating tonight talk about an economic crisis. The Chair has recognized there is an economic crisis. It is an unusual debate. No amount of glossing over it will change it. I am glad the hon. member for Ottawa Centre is here. I say to him that in his own city, the so-called rich city on the banks of the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers, unemployment in the construction industry today in his constituency is 35 per cent.

**Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member for Nepean-Carleton indicated that the Chair recognized that Canada is in a state of economic crisis. I do not

believe that is the case. The Chair does not pass judgment on that issue. This debate came about as a result of a Standing Order 26 motion put forward by the Leader of the New Democratic Party.

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** That is a helpful observation. I now want to get back to the real world of the hon. member for Ottawa Centre. If he talks to the construction people in the national capital area, they will tell him the unemployment rate in that industry is now 35 per cent in this city which across the country is reputed to be well off and is, compared to Windsor and other places. Ask the construction worker, bricklayer, tradesman, artisan and those who supply building materials whether they are happy with the policy of this government. They will tell him. I suggest the hon. member ask them over the telephone rather than get too close to them. It might be better for his health. That is the difficulty in a basic industry.

I invite the hon. member to come to the rural parts of my constituency and talk to the dairy farmers and feed grain producers who look forward to a winter of higher and higher energy costs. Ask those people, not the economists at the Economic Council of Canada, for whom I have great respect, or the public servants in the Department of Finance. Ask the real people who have to go to the banks and borrow the money.

Members opposite will have great opportunities when they go into their constituencies over the Christmas break to ask the people there whether they are happy with the policies of the government. If they do that, their first caucus on their return will be very interesting. Maybe by that time the Minister of Finance will be chastened and ready to change his tune.

I ask the hon. member to visit some of the real estate offices here in Ottawa and to talk to people who will have to refinance their homes. I have talked with employees in this building, let alone those in my constituency, who look forward in March and April to refinancing their mortgages. What is the government offering those people in terms of relief? Nothing.

Why did members opposite talk out our bill? Why are they not suggesting some other form of mortgage relief? They will have to answer these questions. We know why they talked out our bill. They did not like it. What do they substitute for it? What are they going to say to their constituents?

Go to any car dealer. He is as good a businessman as anyone else. Look at the inventory on his lot and ask him how he is going to move it. He will tell you. Go to any purveyor of major goods in the country and he will tell you that the economic picture is sour, bad and must be changed. It is inadequate, unresponsive and irresponsible for a Minister of Finance to stand pat on a budget which is a massive blunder.

I urge my friends opposite to answer us. Do not criticize us. Tell us the policies of the government. What are you going to do? Show me something in the budget that will help the home owner, the Canadian investor in western Canada who wants to invest in the oil industry, the farmer and the small businessman. Show me something in the budget which will allow people who want to buy a home to buy one. I looked for that and I did not find it. Canadians have not found it.