

Heritage Day

Mr. Prud'homme: They make a good contribution to the community.

Mr. Elzinga: Madam Speaker, I stand corrected. When I took several courses they instructed us to use a certain amount of quotation in a debate such as this, and that is what I was attempting to accomplish. I will abide by Your Honour's ruling, however, and not quote the contribution of the Sherwood Park Kinsmen's Club to the community. I think it should be pointed out, however, that Kinsmen is Canada's only service club that is totally Canadian.

I should like to put a question to the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville who has expressed deep concern about our heritage by the introduction of this bill. I should like to know whether he has ever been a member of Heritage Canada?

Mr. MacGuigan: Yes, I am.

Mr. Elzinga: Thank you. Heritage Canada is truly concerned about the many dominant factors that have made Canada what it is today. In this it is like the Kinsmen Clubs because they have shown their concern for our heritage in many ways.

Even though there are many positive aspects of this legislation I feel it is also imperative that members on both sides register some of the negative aspects of the bill. It has been under the rule of our present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that Canada has dropped from being the nation with the second highest income per capita to the eighth highest. I question whether we should introduce a bill that is going to give us another holiday when we are in such a situation. This is not an accomplishment of which we can be proud. The bill asks for another holiday and, as the hon. member for Palliser (Mr. Schumacher) said, it will be a paid holiday. I question whether we as a country, as a people who are constantly decreasing our productivity are in a position to endorse this. We are becoming a country that is over-pricing our exports and this trend will continue if our productivity declines as it has in the past years.

I make one final point in regard to this legislation, Madam Speaker. We cannot condemn the government for it because it is a private member's bill, but I wonder how much investigation was made prior to its introduction. Alberta and, I believe, two other provinces already have a Heritage Day under their provincial jurisdictions. The Alberta Heritage Day falls in August. It appears that this legislation introduced in the House of Commons is in conflict with provincial legislation.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, if we are to be a nation structure in Canada as a whole, it is time we paid more attention to the various provinces and their needs.

● (1630)

Mr. Frank Maine (Wellington): Madam Speaker, at the outset I should like to assure hon. members that I am not opposed to holidays. I am also in favour of recognizing some aspect of our national heritage by holding an annual holiday. The hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan) deserves the congratulations and appreciation of the House and the Canadian people for his work toward that goal. There could not, however, be a more inappropriate time than the present to be giving consideration to the

[The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin).]

implementation of such a proposal. This country just cannot afford to lose a day's production at this time. To declare a national holiday would be to lessen the sincerity with which we have been approaching the whole problem of returning the economy to a healthy state with a good potential for growth in the next few years.

The Economic Council of Canada, in its twelfth annual review, indicated that it will be difficult, if not impossible, for this country to maintain throughout the next decade the record of strong economic growth experienced in the 1960's. Until now we have been able to draw on a steadily increasing labour supply to ensure an annual rise in national productivity. Now that the number of young people entering the work force each year has begun to decline, other options for growth in productivity are having to be considered.

We can attempt to offset the decline in the birth rate by increasing the number of immigrants to Canada every year. Indications are, however, that this approach would be unacceptable to a large number of Canadians. Another option would be to make industry more capital intensive rather than labour intensive. The major problem here is that much if not most of the money needed, assuming it is available, would have to come from foreign sources. We would, therefore, be in the unpleasant situation of having to decide between maintaining what independence we enjoy now and accepting a lower level of productivity, or opening our country up to more foreign influence in order to continue to enjoy the benefits of an expanding economy. The danger that the later choice will become acceptable to many Canadians is very real.

Certainly if there has to be a choice between maintaining our high standard of living by losing more control of our manufacturing and resource industries, and accepting a lowered standard, but with more national independence, the present attitude of Canadians is not reassuring to those concerned with maintaining our ability to act as an autonomous nation.

The Economic Council of Canada reports that Canadians are, in general, relatively complacent about the future of their country's economy. The council warns that our recent slow growth in productivity and the consequential increase in foreign influence have contributed to the erosion of those indigenous capabilities that led to dynamic and innovative behaviour in Canadian industry.

Canadians on the whole are not aware of how badly our country has slipped in relation to other highly industrialized nations. The relatively rapid increase in total national output until now has been based on one of the fastest growing labour forces in the world. When we examine individual productivity, the figures are less than reassuring. Based on data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the average annual increase in output per employed person in Canada was almost the lowest of all industrialized nations during the period between 1960 and 1970. This raises the question of just how efficiently we are utilizing human and natural resources in Canada. It also should cause each individual to re-assess his contribution to the economic growth of this country.

I feel very strongly that this is not the time to reward poor performance with another statutory holiday. We are