

The Canadian Economy

If you want to help the unemployed you must give money to the municipalities and help them with the least amount of frills and administrative costs to give jobs to people and get going with the least possible delay. This is what we must have. To say that we should be prepared now to take this program that has sprung full-fledged from the head of the cabinet, welcome it with loud hosannahs and say it is wonderful when, after all, the government is trying to make up for months and years of neglect, is expecting too much. We hope the program will work. We shall try to make it work but we are from Missouri; we must be shown, because we think of what the government has been doing for years.

Mr. Jerry Pringle (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, when I heard today in the House of Commons that we were to have another debate on the economy I was surprised that we would leave what we were doing, although I commend the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) for taking precious time out for this debate.

It is ironic, in my view, that we should be interrupting the debate on the amendments to the Income Tax Act at this time. I realize that pressure from the opposition was such that it was felt it was an advisable thing to do and so we have done it. Although his speech was excellent, resulting in a commendable program which is being well accepted and is appreciated by all of Canada, it could have been made tomorrow on motions. It is unfortunate we have had to take this previous time away from the Income Tax Act.

Tax changes, or proposed tax changes are disruptive, of course. They are disruptive to the business community at any time. After several years and the expenditure of several million dollars, the government is fulfilling its commitment to the Canadian people by presenting a comprehensive, massive bill providing urgent amendments which we know will affect the lives of most Canadians. In my opinion—it is one which is shared, by the way, by many of my acquaintances in the business world—the first priority of the House of Commons is to complete the debate on Bill C-259. Expansion programs that will now go forward as a result of the statement made by the Minister of Finance, corporate structuring, promotional and sales policies, depend to a very large extent on pro forma projections and balance sheets. Anyone who has been involved in the financing of projects that provide more jobs for Canadians must realize that tax positions are an important part.

• (12:40 a.m.)

I have witnessed the delaying tactics used by members of the opposition, and I am sure I will witness many more irresponsible tactics before Bill C-259 reaches a final vote in committee of the whole. To my knowledge, there has never been a time when the people of Canada have been given such a great opportunity to provide some genuine input in the matter of tax changes as during the preparation of this bill.

Canada's economy, especially since August 15, 1971, must of course receive a great deal of attention. As explained by the Minister of Finance tonight, statistics on unemployment having been published this morning the minister rose from his seat tonight and provided a consid-

erable number of solutions to the problems facing us. Perhaps there are more than is absolutely essential, but they are there for the good of the Canadian people and unquestionably will do the right job. We appreciate them very much.

I submit that the number one necessity in aiding Canada's economy is to indicate through Bill C-259 what the business community's share of the cost burden must be as related to the Income Tax Act. Until this decision is made, segments of Canada's economy will continue to jostle for a little better position to enable them to improve themselves taxwise. But when the bill is passed, it will be accepted as the law of the land and Canadians in all walks of life will once again prove, as they have in the past following tax legislation, that they have the confidence not only in themselves but in Canada to continue to advance the economy to the best of their ability.

Regardless of the irresponsible, panic stricken statements of the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the New Democratic Party—and I particularly refer to their television performances earlier this day—Canadians are enterprising people. The vast majority of the general public is enterprising. They possess initiative; they are imaginative and creative. In my opinion, these are the essential ingredients of a successful economy.

In my opinion the enemies of a successful economy are, first, uncertainty—uncertainty brought about by delay in the tax bill, second, unfair and unrealistic competition through manipulation by multinational corporations and foreign governments. I also consider that one of the enemies of government is too much unrealistic or undue government interference. Lack of confidence in the economy by the purchasing public is another enemy of the economy. All of us in this House of Commons, jointly and severally, should be working to instil confidence in the Canadian people rather than endeavouring to tear it down, as demonstrated tonight by the television appearances I witnessed and some of the speeches I heard.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I would say that the uncontrollable cost increases that are unmatched by increased productivity are probably the worst enemy of the success of any forward-looking policies. In my opinion, the opposition members of this House are guilty of attempting to destroy the confidence of Canadians in themselves. The business community acknowledges the value of guidelines provided by government. Indeed, the business community insists upon them. The government knows that every Canadian is a vital part of the economy and, given a fair opportunity, will respond.

I acknowledge that the policies of government are of considerable influence on the economy. However, in a democracy governmental policies alone, without the participation of the people involved, cannot succeed. When inflation received its promised attention and proposed guidelines were submitted by the Prime Minister in relation to prices and incomes, the business community at least partly co-operated. But those who are organized and able to demand excessive increases in their revenues not only did not respond but attacked the government in a vicious manner and practically challenged the right of the Prime Minister to suggest the only solution to the inflationary spiral.