

● (1550)

An hon. Member: Are you not going to speak on the budget?

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I see that the "crow" from Sherbrooke has not left its post on the fence, doing nothing but croaking—

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Sherbrooke rises on a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Pelletier (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. May I invite the "crow" on the other side of the House to come and make the same speech in my riding?

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. That sounds more like an invitation than a point of order or a question of privilege.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I enjoy these exchanges with the hon. member. They show why he is sitting in the back row.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): At least the hon. member does not crawl away, as some of his colleagues do. He had a brief question he wanted to ask at the beginning of my remarks. Perhaps he might ask it now, and I will deal with it.

[Translation]

Mr. Pelletier (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I have no question. I would have had one at the end of his speech, but as he said nothing, I do not have any—

[English]

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): That is what I thought. In any event, I now move, seconded by the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster (Mr. Bell) the following motion:

[Translation]

That all the words after "That" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"this House does not have confidence in the government by reason of its failure to propose effective budgetary measures to contain and reduce inflation".

[English]

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, when I listened to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner), I understood why he had delayed so long in presenting his budget. Even he was ashamed of it. To suggest that the budget attacks the problem of the rising cost of living is the height of hypocrisy. To suggest that the budget helps those most hurt by the burden of rising prices is the depth of cruelty.

I have said often in this House on behalf of the New Democratic Party, as have other members of my party, that we reject the idea of over-all wage and price controls. In this we agree with the minister, so far as his budget is concerned, although I am somewhat worried about the

The Budget—Mr. Lewis

contingency plan about which the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has spoken.

We disagree with the idea of wage and price controls for reasons we have often given. Let me summarize them in one sentence. I suggest that such policy would either freeze high prices and low wages or would have to be so modified that it would cease to be an over-all plan and would become what the NDP has proposed, a selective price control system. Indeed, the members of the Conservative Party themselves have edited their proposal. First, it was to be a 90-day freeze; then it was to be for 120 days; then they were to institute controls for 18 months. Then, there were to be controls for two years. Then, there would be no freeze or control at the farm gate; then low paid workers were to have their wages lifted. I think the proponents of the idea of over-all price and wage controls have condemned it themselves, because they cannot stick with it.

But equally, we will not accept the proposition that nothing can be done for the people of Canada with respect to the rising cost of living. We reject the notion that you can let the corporations control the market at the expense of the consumer, and slap them on the wrist for so doing, as the minister did yesterday. The redistribution of income in Canada that has taken place in the last year or two has been redistribution in reverse, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gillies: That is absolutely right.

Mr. Lewis: Wages in the 12-month period between February, 1973 and February, 1974 rose by only 8 per cent, but the cost of living index rose by 9.6 per cent, leaving the worker worse off than he had been one year earlier. In 1971, sir, profits as a proportion of the Gross National Product were at 9.6 per cent; but, in 1973 they rose to 13.7 per cent of the Gross National Product. That was an increase of 42.7 per cent in the proportion that profits in our economy gouged out of the people of this country. At the same time the proportion that went to wages in 1971 was 55 per cent; in 1973, it was down to 53.2 per cent. Everywhere you look, Mr. Speaker, redistribution of income in this country has taken place in reverse. Wealth has been redistributed; it has gone in ever larger, stronger and more powerful concentrations to the centre of this country, at the expense of the average Canadian.

Just listen to the logic of the Minister of Finance in two or three places in his budget address. In comparing him with his colleagues, at least I respect him for his honesty and straightforwardness. Just listen to his logic. He said that if we have a two-price system for some of our basic commodities, we will need some kind of control over exports. That, he said with self-conscious pomposity, would be the height of folly. Let me remind the Minister of Finance that we now have a two-price system for oil, for wheat and for copper. I would like to understand the logic which suggests that if you also have it for steel, lumber and cement, it becomes the height of folly.

● (1600)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: What utter, unmitigated rubbish. Of course, you would need to have some export controls if you hold