

reassure Canadians? No one is against old age security, on the contrary. But he wanted to tell us the Liberals have done something in the last few years. So, he brings up a story that goes back 30 years. But there are more pressing things to attend to, Mr. Speaker. A situation exists now that is of great concern to Canadians. I feel hon. members must express their concern and ask this government to take what steps are indicated under the circumstances.

Thirteen years of Liberal administration: unbelievable failure, sad record, both politically and economically; we see the results today. Some will say, of course, that last February Canadians showed their confidence in this government, giving it a six-member majority. But one must be careful about saying that the Canadian people as a whole believed in this government. It may be that not very many Quebecers are happy today; that 68 per cent of them today do not cheer about the present interest rate and the situation which low-income workers will have to face in the coming months. So, I say the policies served up by this government are nothing but a pitiful failure.

Last year, at about this time, we were going through an election campaign; we had thought things out seriously and were working assiduously to steer the economy and the country back onto the road to prosperity. Now, we have obvious proof of 13 years of power leading the country to decline and bankruptcy. Of course, our friends opposite will argue this, as best they can, trying to justify a government that considered various solutions or tried to maintain a viable economy through artificial measures. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is not here, and it could be said that I should not talk about him when he is not here, but even if he were, I would say the same thing.

● (0200)

The Prime Minister is now trying to amend our constitution by imagining an artificial Canada. This is not the way for Canadians to live comfortably. Last year we introduced measures which called for courage, and 85 per cent of business managers endorsed the economic direction that we proposed to take. We gave its proper role to private enterprise and incited it to create jobs because it was impatient to see where the government was going. What were our mid and long-term policies? We showed clearly what they were. Of course, Canadians had to make some sacrifices, but they were ensured of an economic direction which would have avoided the difficulties and the hardships they have known since last February. Our budget was defeated on the issue of interest rates. Canadians should be reminded of this fact.

Our projections concerning the inflation rate seemed unacceptable to those who wanted to regain power and who then put completely aside the national interest by not considering whether the country was still able to afford elections and to continue to stagnate for another year, because while we took

seven and a half months to bring down a budget, the Minister of Finance cannot be congratulated for the time he took to bring down his own budget, and what a budget it was!

Serious organizations, and I am not the only one to say so, clearly question the validity of this budget. Serious people are now criticizing the budget. I saw recently that the chairman of Petrofina strongly condemned the energy proposals of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde). For our part, Mr. Speaker, we believed that the private sector should take its proper place in our economy and make profits in Canada. When we know the Prime Minister and where he comes from, when we know about his former socialist philosophy, which, as a point of fact, he still holds, as our friends opposite realize even though they lack the courage to do anything about it, we can see that this worries the private sector tremendously.

I must point out that the Independent Petroleum Companies Association, which includes 200 Canadian companies, has felt the need to publish a document addressed to Mr. Lalonde and entitled "Your Energy Policy is Harmful to Canadians". It will increase the dependency of Canadians on foreign oil. It will bring about long-term higher prices for gasoline. It will delay needed exploration; it will cause the loss of thousands of jobs. This is what is happening, Mr. Speaker. Our friends opposite try to speak about an energy policy and self-sufficiency, but this government should have been farsighted enough to make these projections ten years ago.

How could I not remind Canadians, Mr. Speaker, that for purely electoral reasons in 1978 and 1979, this government refused to set normal prices for gasoline instead of maintaining an artificial price? Economists are now talking about it and they realize that the government did not have the guts to rectify the situation at the proper time. Today, the government implores us not to blame it and says that this is the fault of the United States. Canada could have solved this problem in the last 13 years. It did not happen.

Of course, they will talk about social measures. They reminded me a short while ago that the government had dealt seriously with the unemployment insurance benefit problem, but after it had caused some 1,400,000 workers to lose their jobs. It felt that it had to provide them with a meagre pittance so they could eat three times a day. It is because of this sort of leadership that we are faced with this incredible economic failure, Mr. Speaker. They have refused to behave like responsible people. They were satisfied with toeing the party line without the least consideration for the future of Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, I must remind my Quebec friends that the Prime Minister and his government seem to administer by following the famous "*divide ut regnes*" formula. Over the past 13 years, they have succeeded in creating enough confrontation to alienate the provinces and start a real war between them and the federal government such as the one we see today. Although jealous of their wealth Albertans are willing to share