

Family Allowances

per cent faster than the United States cost of living in respect of food. These are the hard facts. I believe it is time that one or more ministers in the present government responsible for this situation stood up, acted responsibly in this House and admitted they have made mistakes and that inflation, because of their mishandling of the economy is now out of control and they wish our assistance in righting the matter.

● (2150)

An hon. Member: Why don't you act responsibly?

Mr. Gillies: Go back to sleep.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Are you for the bill?

Mr. Stevens: The hon. member to my left is very anxious to know whether I am for the bill. That, to me, is very similar to the same hon. member rushing over to my car after the nail that he put on the ground in front of me punctured my tire and asking whether I would like him to put a patch on my tire so that I can blow it up again.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I did no such thing.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I left the chair for a while, and when I returned and listened to the hon. member speak I had difficulty in reconciling his speech with what I thought was the subject matter of the debate this evening, that is, Bill C-223. I hope that an effort will be made by the hon. member, not necessarily to tell us whether he is for or against the bill but to tell us something about the bill itself.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately you were not here during my earlier remarks—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Unfortunately?

An hon. Member: He is the luckiest guy in the building.

Mr. Stevens:—at which time you would have known why I took the course that I did. I was induced by the minister who, in making his introductory remarks concerning the bill, introduced himself the questions which I am now attempting to refute I wish to at least bring into perspective in the House the matter of inflation. I have been asked whether I support the bill. How can an hon. member ask me such a question—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stevens:—after hearing my remarks to date.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): That is precisely why I am asking.

Mr. Stevens: If I may, I would like to sum up—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Question.

[Mr. Stevens.]

Mr. Stevens:—by simply saying that this bill is necessary and should be passed by the House because of the inflationary economy in which we find ourselves now. But I would add that it is an inflationary economy that we do not need to have in Canada. It would have been far better for the government to have taken steps to ensure that the inflationary effect which they are attempting to relieve in this bill did not get out of control to the extent it did; then in fact this bill would not have been necessary. I say this because, if I may again refer to the minister's speech, he stated:

The bill before us constitutes one aspect of the strategy adopted by the government to fight inflation.

An hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: One lone member on the government benches supported that statement. But I ask in all seriousness: Can you say that this bill is fighting inflation in any way?

An hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Stevens: It may relieve the effects of inflation, but surely it is a gross misrepresentation to indicate that this is a measure to fight inflation. If anything, it will probably add to inflation.

I believe that it would serve the House better if the government were to bring in some legislation to help contain inflation. Included in that legislation I would suggest that they should bring in some measures to curb federal spending. I suggest that the least they could do would be to freeze their spending, or at least to bring it into a near-freeze situation. As has been already indicated, it is one thing to pass legislation which they feel would relieve the impact of inflation to which they have contributed. Surely, however, they will do it eventually. Today would be better than later, so why do they not bring in wage and price controls to help curb inflation?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stevens: A survey is being conducted by an independent source very close to this city which certainly indicates that such wage and price controls are desirable. If they want it in Cornwall, I know they want it throughout the nation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: I also suggest it is time the government considered structural reforms in order to remove certain of the economic abuses in our structural system that result from the monopolistic power of companies and unions. I believe that the government must accept more responsibility for their monetary policies, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) indicated in the House—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister is seeking the floor on a point of order.

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party has been known—

Some hon. Members: Order.