

Christmas Recess

sit down and discuss with us in advance problems which he anticipated would be occurring. This has been a very useful exercise and I give him credit for that. I can also say there has been a great deal of co-operation from this party. After six or seven years in this position, I find it remarkable that when problems are detected, consultations between House leaders or representatives of the parties behind Your Honour's chair and sometimes from out seats can facilitate the proceedings of this House. This has been excellently demonstrated during this part of the session.

● (1120)

One thing for which I do commend the government very sincerely is the extent to which they are now moving toward recognition of the fact that some benefit is derived from private members' bills and motions. I hope that in the procedure committee next year this matter will be covered in the changes to the rules, because from members of this House outside the cabinet, members who are in close contact with their constituents, there come ideas and proposals which need to be discussed, voted upon and considered in committee. I detect many signs that the rather glacial-like approach which existed some six years ago is now melting and we are getting much more co-operation from the government in accepting private members' views. For that I commend the hon. gentlemen in the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, this is a debatable motion, but it came to me as somewhat of a surprise that the government House leader chose to initiate debate on it. In fact, it came as a particular surprise that he should rise to list the few things the government has done, without realizing that that invites those of us on this side of the House to list the many things the government has not done.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Eleven bills passed.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I know that my hon. friends are sensitive about one thing that has not been done.

An hon. Member: Especially Warren Allmand.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Perhaps before I say the two or three things I want to say about the business of the House, I could express my thanks to the government House leader for his kind words toward his opposite numbers, the House leaders on this side. It is a little better than something he said about me a few days ago, but he has since given me his personal apology for what he said on CBC radio a few nights ago and I accept that and his good wishes now as wiping that out. I also want to thank the government House leader, on behalf of all my colleagues in this party, for the good wishes he extended for the Christmas season. All of us extend those greetings back to the government, to the other parties in the House, and indeed to all members of this House; and to you, sir, and your family we extend best wishes for a very

[Mr. Baldwin.]

joyful Christmas and a happy 1975. Having said those things—

Some hon. Members: "But"!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): —and having said them quite sincerely, I should like, with equal sincerity and seriousness—

An hon. Member: To call for restraint.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): We have done that all week. I should like to point out that only a few months ago we were in the midst of an election campaign in which the government opposite called for a majority government so that it could give this country leadership. I am startled that the government House leader tries to get up this morning and pretend that we have had leadership in the few months in which this parliament has been sitting. The number of bills that have been passed is nothing compared to the problems facing this country.

An hon. Member: Don't blame it on the government.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The government has a clear and absolute majority in this House. It can do what it wants to, except when it tries to do something foolish, as it did this week. With the country's support, we were able to stop it.

Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the plight of 20,000 auto workers laid off or about to be laid off and nothing has been done about that by the government. Inflation is increasing apace, and the bill the government brought in this week will trigger even more inflation. It has no programs to cope with inflation problems, no new programs to cope with unemployment generally or winter unemployment in particular. We have a major increase in our trade deficit and no programs to cope with that situation. No legislation has been passed regarding housing. We had a bill yesterday, but the new Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Danson) gave the impression, when he took over the portfolio, that there was going to be action right away. But 1974 has gone, Mr. Speaker, and housing starts are down. We have a bill that really will not do much.

As for the promises we had from the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) on November 5 and 6 that there would be legislation to replace the Veterans Land Act, it is now pretty clear that there is not going to be legislation. There is going to be some kind of arrangement, but we have not yet got that. I also say very strongly and with deep concern that nothing has been done in this session to cope with the problems facing old age pensioners who have to rely on old age security. There have been improvements to the Canada Pension Plan that will come into effect in 1975, it is true, but those improvements are no help to those who receive no CPP. There have also been the ordinary quarterly escalations in old age security and the guaranteed income supplement that we won in the minority parliament. But those escalations are always behind the actual rise in the cost of living both in terms of amount and in terms of the time they come into effect.

This week there was a proposal that certain privileged persons in Canada, namely, ourselves, were to get the cost