

*Economic Conditions*

improved measures when we are faced with a difficult situation.

Mr. Speaker, since the motion has been introduced by the Social Credit Party of Canada, I am glad I was given the opportunity to make a few remarks and of course would not want to deny to an hon. member of that party and to their leader, the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin), the chance to take part in the debate. Therefore, I will limit myself to these few remarks in which I have tried to be objective and I will thus let the hon. member for Lotbinière close the debate.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. With the permission of the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin), I would inform him that under Standing Order 37 he is allowed to reply at this time. According to Beauchesne's Citation 166 (4), when someone introduces a motion as the hon. member did, even though he yielded to the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette), he is still considered as having had the floor. Therefore, if I recognize him now, I would allow to reply and if he cannot use the 18 or 20 minutes left to him, the debate would end anyhow.

The hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) has the floor.

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** I wish to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your courtesy. This will give me and my colleague from Joliette (Mr. La Salle) who has just pointed out the fact that we have to share the few remaining minutes, the opportunity to speak on this motion. The reason why I gave the floor to the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) was to give him his first opportunity to take part in the debates of this House.

Mr. Speaker, this motion will surely irritate some members who believe that the present government has taken an excellent approach to the economical problems facing Canadians today. As for me, I believe that this motion deals with the roots of our problems which is the social climate that prevails in Canada and particularly in Quebec and which has become a source of friction, an expression of misunderstanding and a clear symptom, in some cases, of a tendency to split the country. Our country, Mr. Speaker, is presently experiencing the highest unemployment rate and the most acute constitutional dispute in its history and these two things are happening at a time when the government is still fighting inflation.

In the few minutes that I have left, I would like to elaborate on these three points and express our deep conviction that this government lacks the sense of leadership and innovation that is really needed to face the future. Its fight against inflation has not prevented rising costs in housing, nor has this controversial law and its commission prevented a petrol price increase. Food prices kept rising as well, and so have interest rates in Canada.

● (1750)

Concerning the fight against inflation, through the same publicity which was used in the by-elections, the government is trying to make people believe that it was successful in controlling the profits of some companies. That, Mr. Speaker, does not impress me because lower and middle class taxpayers had

[Mr. La Salle.]

to face an ever increasing cost of living while a ceiling was imposed on their wages.

In my opinion, those anti-inflation measures have been a failure at that level. If we go back to the beginning, we can remember that in a speech by the Prime Minister the government had invited every Canadian to join the fight against international inflation. But, Mr. Speaker, Canadians did not. One has only to consider the tensions created by the government with labour in general to realize in all objectivity—as we were urged to do by the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Marceau) and the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle)—that the fight against inflation generally has been done at the expense of poorer people. The fight against inflation which has become a very high priority for the government has been carried out by increasing our unemployment rate, because in its wisdom and its economic orthodoxy the government said, as some members of this House will recall, that it was impossible to fight both inflation and unemployment at the same time.

The basic policy choice at that time was to fight inflation while trying to lessen as much as possible the secondary effects on unemployment, and that is really what we were told here in the last two budget speeches. Mr. Speaker, the present rate of unemployment in Canada—and in this respect I agree with the hon. member of Lapointe when he talks about training courses—particularly affects our young people, for they make up the bulk of the unemployed. That is why unemployment is particularly serious. Mr. Speaker, the fight against inflation has led directly to unemployment. Why? Because in the long run it has curtailed investments. Secondly, by curtailing investments it has forced consumers to look for the best quality possible, at the best price available. And so, we see, on looking at the statistics, not of our party but of Statistics Canada, that since the start of the fight against inflation the rate of imports of staple commodities, such as clothing and footwear, has increased in Canada. And that, because the demand has gone up. Actually, consumers wanted the best prices possible, because, on the one hand, a ceiling was put on salary increases, and on the other, the necessities of life such as housing, food, clothing went without price controls, as they still do.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, after a while we are faced with an alarming, not to say discouraging, rate of unemployment. The hon. member for Lapointe, whom I congratulate for his honesty, has recognized that in his riding that rate is, to quote him, unacceptable. I think all hon. members will admit that the very same situation prevails. Because of what I have explained, unemployment is felt even more in the processing area such as the textile and furniture industries. So, Mr. Speaker, that explains our first proposal. The hon. member for Lapointe said a while ago that unfortunately, the Social Credit members are not making any new proposals. I have always thought that a proposal is not necessarily good only if it is something new.

Yet, it has often been repeated in this House that it is time, it is even urgent that our tariffs, our laws and regulations governing imports were comprehensively and exhaustively reviewed in every sector. I need only refer to the position taken