

has used the first possible day available to it to put forward a motion in this parliament dealing with the major issue facing the Canadian people. Yet there is apparently no one in the government who is capable or competent to get up and speak on this issue and to defend the government's program.

I say this so often but parliamentarians wonder over and over again why the people of Canada are holding parliament in such low repute. The answer is clear: parliament is irrelevant. How irrelevant it can be is shown by the fact that when we have a day set aside to discuss the most important and the most serious economic situation, potentially the most dangerous economic situation that the country has faced in generations, there is nobody here from the government to debate it.

**An hon. Member:** Where are all the Tories?

**Mr. Gillies:** Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that if we are going to make parliament work, if we are going to make parliament relevant, we must have important debates.

**An hon. Member:** There are only eight of you Tories here.

**Mr. Gillies:** We cannot do our job as parliamentarians if we cannot debate these important issues. On top of that, we could not get from this government a reference to the standing committee so that we could really examine these issues in that extension of parliament. What we are doing now in that committee is smuggling in, under a reference of the Bank Act, a discussion on this matter, debating and wrangling about who should be there. Should we not have a debate with the best experts, the best people we can find on these issues? Is that not what it is all about? Are we not trying to solve the problems for the sake of the Canadian people? Yet here we are unable to get a debate of any relevance going in the House of Commons because the government once again—presumably they are afraid to talk about their policies—has no one to put up to talk on the issues that are in front of us at present.

I noted with interest some of the comments made by the Minister of Transport. Most of them were irrelevant, and those that were not irrelevant were incorrect. He discussed the fact that the Canadian economy may be in difficulty because of some of the things that are being said by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) and members of the opposition party in spite of the fact that we have the most incredible Minister of Finance this country has ever had, a Minister of Finance who rises in the House of Commons and says the government is not supporting the dollar at the same time as he goes out and borrows over \$5 billion to support the dollar; who says the dollar is moving up with slight market fluctuations at the same time as he is using more money in defence of the dollar than has ever been used in Canadian history. The Minister of Transport has the unmitigated gall—I hate to use that word, but lacks common sense—to question the credibility of the Leader of the Opposition, when there has never been—and I challenge anybody on the government side to dispute this statement—a minister of finance with as little credibility as the current Minister of Finance. Everywhere you go, Mr. Speaker, if you ever leave the Hill and talk to people engaged

in investment activities, you find that the minister has little credibility.

One of the reasons the Canadian dollar is in trouble is that the government has no credibility. How can this government talk about credibility, a government that campaigns against wage and price controls and then, when it gets elected, puts them in? We will not have any reasonable, hopeful economic policy in this country until we change the government. What is wrong with our economic management and has caused the feeling by people around the world about our economy is that the government have made so many disastrous errors; they speak from both sides of the mouth, and no one knows what their policy is, if there is any policy. They show inability and unwillingness to give to the committee the power to permit members of parliament to fulfil their function by discussing the economic issues with the best experts and getting the best advice they can get. It is disgraceful in the extreme and shows how bankrupt the government are, how frightened they are of exposing what is going on in this country.

Compare our situation with the way in which economic policy is debated in any country in the western world. The other night the President of the United States made a report to Congress on the state of the American economy. Why did he do that? He did it because by the full employment act of 1946 he is required to do so by law and to make a forecast on how the American economy will operate so that people can evaluate it. The Congress holds hearings with witnesses, members of Congress can get an evaluation of what policy should be put in place, and Americans are informed of what the issues are.

It seems that would never do for Canada; it would never do for the Liberals. They do not want people to know. They do not want to solve the problems. That is the only conclusion one can reach from the way in which they operate. Today on the first allotted day to the opposition which is devoted to the most important problem in Canada, to have no minister in the economic area in the House of Commons to defend government policy is utterly disgraceful and shows the lack of ability there is in the government. They cannot find anybody. One person is out of town so they cannot find anybody else to speak on economic problems for the government on this particular day.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** There is the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Danson).

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This is an aspersion cast against the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien). As was explained quite clearly, he is in New York, in answer to a long standing invitation, to address the Council of Foreign Relations. The minister who spoke in his place is Acting Minister of Finance, and he handled the subject quite capably on behalf of the minister.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** That is not a point of order.

**Mr. Gillies:** I would have thought the Minister of Finance—