

Economic Conditions

As I mentioned earlier, Alvin Toffler has described us as being in the third wave, the information revolution. In 1960, 43 per cent of Canadian workers were white-collar workers. It is estimated that by the year 2000 only 5 per cent of Canada's labour force will consist of blue-collar workers. This means a tremendous explosion in the technologies of performing office work and the increased enhancement of the role of the white-collar worker, and we have to be prepared for that revolution. We have to recognize it as being upon us, and we have to be prepared to take the steps to ensure that Canadians are at the forefront of this development of all world competition.

The total cost of office operations is estimated in Canada to run about 43 per cent of our GNP, if we can extrapolate figures from United States projections. This gives us the opportunity for many innovative programs and, for increasing capital investment available to office workers. Right now it is about \$2,000 per worker, compared to \$35,000 for factory workers and \$70,000 for farmers. This is an area in which we must be prepared to make those investments. I hope it comes from the private sector. But we, as a government, which is filled with paper burden, with the white paper and white-collar workers, can take a lead, and it is one area we are examining. I believe it is through this type of co-operative effort in recognizing the importance of the office worker that we will be able to put ourselves in the forefront.

Much of the discussion in this 15-hour debate has involved the grievances of the west. I have had the opportunity as a member of Parliament to benefit from my travels to the west, to work with members from the west, members opposite, people from the west, industry, in fact, members from all political parties. I have benefited particularly from an extensive memorandum I have received from the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone). Just as it would have been impossible for members in this House from all parties to understand what was happening in the Quebec referendum, and for us to understand the intensity of emotion in the present issues, without having an appreciation of the historical background which applied to the life of Quebeckers and what they had gone through during the centuries since coming to Canada, I think it is impossible for us in this House to understand the intensity of feeling in the west without having some appreciation for their historical grievances which go back many, many years. We are aware of these.

My parents came from the prairies. They lost their farm during the depression. We know about mortgage foreclosures, freight rates, and the legitimate concern of the west for industrialization. We should have new ways to encourage tourism within Canada so that Canadians do not go south in the winter. We have the most beautiful country in the world. It is one we should be exploiting as a great centre of tourism twelve months of the year.

We recognize the whole area of resource ownership as important. We have made concessions in our constitutional package and we recognized it in the budget. We need financial institutions which are responsive to western Canadian needs. Here again I would like to compliment the private sector on

making the financial institutions, many of our biggest banks, more responsive to western needs by moving their offices out there. But let us face it, there is a feeling among some westerners that the east, and perhaps even Ottawa, does not understand their needs, their history, and their aspirations. I believe that all of us working in a rational, concerned manner can do a great deal to create national understanding and national unity by talking on common ground about these issues rather than for whatever short political gain there may be.

We know how easy it is to criticize. But it is understanding and constructive alternatives in terms of energy policy that we want to hear about. We do not want to sit here and listen to rhetoric. We know it is emotional and heartfelt and we know it may be founded, but what we want to hear are constructive alternatives in policy direction. Until those are forthcoming, I must say that our government is taking a very responsible approach with the national energy package in an attempt to meet the needs of Canadians from coast to coast.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but I must advise him that his allotted time has expired.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I phoned my wife last night and told her I would be late for dinner, but I did not expect to be this late.

First, I want to congratulate those members who stayed up to take part in the debate over night. We are in the fifteenth hour of the debate. It is an important issue. I want to thank all members who have taken part and who have listened to each other. They deserve the congratulations of all members of the House. In that same spirit, I would like to congratulate our financial critic who also stayed right through the debate. He never left this building since the debate started at eight o'clock last night. Something that is a bit of a contradiction is when you are speaking officially on Thursday, the eighteenth, to be able to quote from *The Citizen* of Friday, the nineteenth. One headline reads "Opposition lashes MacEachen". We did lash the finance minister all night, and for very good reason.

• (1030)

It is regrettable that more members of the cabinet did not listen to what members on both sides of this House were saying. We are facing very difficult economic times. We did not stay up all night just to have a free ride and enjoy ourselves in this House of Commons. We recognize that we have a very serious economic and social climate in this country. We realize that the government has the ability to do something to improve that climate. What is that climate?

We all know that yesterday the Bank of Canada rate increased to 17.36 per cent and the prime rate to 18.25 per cent. Most Canadians, even with good credit ratings, will be paying in excess of 20 per cent for their loans. The cost of living on a year over year basis has gone up over 11.2 per cent. We know that bankruptcies in this nation are running at 16 per cent, and in some provinces like Manitoba the percentage is even higher.