

Summer Recess

more than housekeeping. They must face the urgent problems and the potential that exists in this country. I do not want to have another session of this Thirty-second Parliament that dedicates itself to anything but housekeeping.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: I think it worthwhile reviewing the manner in which the Liberal government has acted in the last seven months, seven months of a majority government, to correct the problems which it faces as a nation and which challenge this Parliament. In the seven months since the Trudeau government was elected and assumed power, the deficit in Canada has grown by \$3.7 billion. Since February alone another 51,000 Canadians have become unemployed. Inflation, as the figures cited today indicate, has now reached double digit proportions in Canada for the first time in almost five years. Virtually every economic forecast concludes that the economic situation will worsen significantly before it improves. The point which the government apparently does not understand is that one of the major contributing factors to economic problems in this country is the absolute lack of clarity as to what are the economic intentions of this government.

What does it intend to do? What is the government's attitude toward inflation? What policies will this government introduce? When will we have a budget? When will there be an economic statement? What is going to happen to indexation? All of these questions which deal directly with the ability of individual Canadians to make their plans, to live their lives, to build the country, all of these questions are cast in shadow. Since February the Liberal government has given no indication of any consistent economic plan or program. Neither has it given an indication of having any on its agenda.

Of course one of the other major problems which the nation faces is that both consumers and producers of energy in Canada are faced this many months after the election in February with increasing uncertainty regarding the price of petroleum—prices are being increased by stealth two cents at a time—and regarding security of supply. Any government confronted with these difficulties ought to be prepared to act honestly and openly to correct the problems. In fact, as I mentioned, the throne speech held out for Canadians the hope and the promise that this government was finally prepared to act. It promised and I quote, "that the deficit would be reduced in a planned and orderly way". That was one promise in the throne speech. Another promise in the throne speech was, and I quote, "security of energy supply at a fair price for all Canadians". Security of energy supply at a fair price for all Canadians! Again quoting from the speech, "the burden of economic sacrifice would be shared equally". Well, the record of this government on any of those questions has not borne out its promises.

● (1520)

What has this government done with its brand new majority mandate? There has been no budget. There has been no energy agreement. There has been no sense of direction, no

effort to correct the drift of the last seven months. What has the government been doing? Well, Mr. Speaker, the largest amount of legislative time in the House of Commons has been devoted to a bill to borrow an additional \$12 billion. I make the point that this comes from a government which said, a brief six months ago, that only \$3.5 billion was required. In opposition they said \$3.5 billion; in government they want \$12 billion. That is the legislative item which has consumed the greatest amount of time in the House. The spending deficit of the government will be \$14 billion. Apparently that is a "planned and orderly reduction" as promised in the Speech from the Throne!

What else have they done? Well, they have introduced, perhaps in a way which is illegal, perhaps in a way which violates the law of the land and would hold the Crown open to suit, a levy on Syncrude products which would increase the price of gasoline by two cents a litre but also applying to home heating oil and other fuels which were exempted from the taxes and the levies anticipated and announced by the Progressive Conservative government last year.

My hon. friend from Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) raised a question eloquently the other day about members of Parliament from Atlantic Canada. Why were they not speaking out in protest against the increase in home heating fuels for elderly Canadians in Atlantic Canada, for elderly Canadians in the province of Quebec, for elderly Canadians anywhere whose circumstances are too straitened to allow them to adjust to this increase in the cost of home heating fuel, snuck in by a government that won its way to office by promising there would be no increases, or smaller increases in the cost of energy? That promise to the widows of Wolfville, to the low income Canadians across this country, has been cavalierly broken and broken in a way which may breach the laws of this land.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Clark: They introduced as well an employment tax credit which provides no incentives to target the creation of employment for women, for young people, for natives, for the handicapped. So much for the promise of this government—and I quote again—"to meet the needs of these groups who face special problems in finding jobs". Those people are talked about at the time of campaigns and talked about by the Liberals at times of throne speeches, but their concerns are not reflected in the legislation brought before the House of Commons. That is shameful neglect and shameful duplicity by this government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Finally, the government smuggled in an economic statement which failed to provide any new initiatives to get the country working again. The Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) at that time told the House he would—and I quote him—"consider measures that will distribute the burdens of both unemployment and inflation more equitably." Yet in that smuggled budget he brought in he neglected the