

means of support for her and her family, the wage or salary earner forming part of the vast majority of our work force where the ability to negotiate a higher rate of income is almost non-existent, the businessman locked into a contract which makes no provision for a higher revenue to him in the face of substantially rising costs, all these people depend on someone and, I suggest, look to the government for leadership to somehow or other help them out of their predicament by taking steps to introduce measures which will alleviate the upward spiral of the inflationary infection which is having such an undesirable effect on their very ability to make ends meet in the course of their already limited standard of living.

Further up the line we have the middle-income group who form a larger and larger proportion of the Canadian social fabric. They are perhaps those who have been able to or are steadily saving toward the purchase of a home in which to live and raise their families. Just when they are at a point where they envisage moving, if a purchase is being considered, or start making their first mortgage payments in the case of a purchase having been made, the rising inflationary factor seems to sweep their accomplishment out of their hands and they find themselves once again against the wall.

It is at a time like this that a government—in my view, particularly a national government—must act. It must make a move to show leadership to the people who elected it to govern. This is what I suggest the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau) did on the evening of October 13, 1975. He and the government took the bull by the horns and came out with an anti-inflation policy which, I suggest to the House, is receiving increasing support across the country as the weeks go by.

Let me speak further on this aspect of leadership which was raised by the hon. member for Richmond (Mr. Beaudoin). Why anti-inflation measures now? Why not six months hence? I should like to deal with this question. The reason for not postponing the inevitable at this point—this, I suggest, reflects on leadership—is simply that the nation could probably not sustain a further six months of unbounded leaps in the rate at which the Canadian dollar was decreasing in terms of the goods and services it could acquire. A move was required without further delay.

● (1620)

The swift and concerted attention which has swung toward the Anti-Inflation Board in its early days of existence is surely an indication of the inflationary forces which beset the Canadian economy last fall. Leadership was required as the thirtieth parliament was about to reconvene after the summer recess. Leadership came, and it is astounding that once it arrived, those opposition voices which cry for leadership whenever they run out of viable alternative policies to place before this House—and unfortunately that is all too frequently—cringed in despair as the principal crutch on which they spent so much time leaning was virtually snapped out of their hands. Opposition members were bereft and without the apparent means to bolster themselves up with a new crutch. They were so disorganized that the official opposition of this country, the party to whom Canadians look as the only viable alternative on the national horizon, were caught with their proverbial pants down and voted against the very type of

Canadian Economy

legislation which they themselves promoted as a cure-all to Canada's ills only a short 15 months before. That is very strange behaviour indeed and, I suggest, is most incomprehensible to the minds of the voters of this country.

The hon. member for Richmond is concerned about unemployment in this country. So am I; so are we all. The point to be made is that whatever evils may accompany unemployment—and, granted, there are many—these evils will undoubtedly be greater in the event that an inflationary rate which has achieved the dubious distinction of two-figure status is not brought under control. The hon. member speaks of lack of foresight. Is it not a distinct example of foresight, carefully applied, to look a growing national problem in the eye, to consider its probable impact over the ensuing months and years, and then to act?

That is what our Prime Minister did on the evening of October 13. That is what the government I support did in following up the initial action of the Prime Minister by sending its ministers out to the hustings to explain to the Canadian people exactly why the new anti-inflation policy was a clear example of foresight and leadership on the part of the elected officials who had been charged with the task of running the government of this country for the next four years or so, as of July, 1974. Foresight and leadership we have, based on sound rationale and supported by a careful analysis and examination of the situation at hand.

Responding for a moment to the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom), unemployment is a problem in this country which has always occupied a high level of attention by this government and will continue to do so in the future. However, let us make one point very clear. There are many factors accounting for unemployment problems in a given country at any given time.

An hon. Member: The Liberal government is the biggest one.

Mr. Martin: However, we must be sensible about this. Governments do not create unemployment; they try to react to the conditions which bring about unemployment. That is why we have DREE, that is why we have Opportunities for Youth Programs in the summer. That is why we endeavour to equalize tax revenue situations across the country. That is why so much of our effort is directed toward overcoming the disparities and the difficulties faced by people in various regions of the country. It is to make every endeavour, within the free enterprise system, to bolster the economies of regions and the society which makes up these regions. That is why we are constantly searching for new export markets and encouraging Canadian industry to look beyond its more traditional markets within and without the country. All these government initiatives are aimed at strengthening the Canadian economy and at providing more and more jobs for an ever-expanding work force.

Obviously, from time to time difficulties in the area of any government initiatives will be encountered and this is particularly so when such initiatives are aimed at producing more jobs. A softening of world markets is bound to make it more difficult for an exporting industry to increase its production and thus hire more workers. A tightening of the money supply within the country will