

Economic Conditions

Uncertainty, fear, and apprehension prevail, and we cannot achieve solid economic development under those circumstances. For the first time the minister of finance for the province of Ontario is deploring the impact of the budget and the energy policy. As reported in *The Toronto Sun*, Mr. Miller said:

"The reduction . . . from over a dollar to 85 cents very suddenly didn't have half as great an impact on the economy as we thought it would . . . Now we're talking from 83 cents to 80 cents perhaps. I would argue that that's not going to have as great an impact."

Miller also repeated Ontario's call in its November budget for federal participation in helping poor people pay their heating bills.

He went on to say that it would be roughly \$400 million over a three-year period. This is the first time the finance minister of Ontario has registered an element of protest against federal policies which he said he will have to go back and discuss with his premier because he is concerned. That can be coupled with the province of Nova Scotia indicating that the debt will be piled on the provinces, so that the federal government can get rid of it. Also that can be coupled with the moving out of the oil industry; the trend is there.

We are not the only ones who are complaining. One would think, from listening to the hon. member for Ottawa Centre, that members on this side of the House are the only ones who are complaining. Has he not read the press reports? Has he not read the multitude of articles or the personal letters which are critical of the government's behaviour and explain the hurt? Has he not read the article which was entitled: "Policy of Drift Costly", which reads in part as follows:

MacEachen and Bouey are doing nothing more than looking for a scapegoat. Canada does not have to follow the U.S. policy. Those in the government or its employ who say we must track American interest rates would also then have to admit that Liberal economic, industrial, trade, ownership and energy policies of the last dozen years have allowed this predicament to develop.

I did not write that, so members opposite should not say that I am the only critic. The article continues:

By trying to support the dollar with high interest rates, the Bank of Canada and its silent mentor, the government, is supposed to be keeping imported foodstuffs within the buying power of average Canadians. Ironically, the high interest rate policy is simultaneously making it harder for Canadian farmers to produce domestic foodstuffs.

I have just one last sentence. The hon. member for Ottawa Centre mentioned food and its cost. In 1970 it probably cost farmers between \$10 and \$16 in interest a year to grow an acre of potatoes. In 1980 the farmer who is now planning for next year's crop is looking at \$200 per acre. Is that practical food policy to the hon. member for Ottawa Centre?

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. McCain: I think that speaks for itself.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bob Ogle (Saskatoon East): Mr. Speaker, as the night wears on I am sure members are tired, and probably Canada is tired, but we are debating a very important matter. We are talking about something which is affecting us and will affect more profoundly the life of every person in the country.

I should like to bring to our discussion and debate tonight some ideas which I do not think have been expressed. Although we, as Canadians, are struggling with an inflation problem unlike the ones of the past, in relation to the world scene the problem faced by Canadians is a relatively easy one.

● (0040)

As members from both sides of the House are speaking tonight about the effects of inflation, the falling dollar and the effects of unemployment, I would like to put on record that even though our statistics are not good, and even though Canadians, young and old, are suffering from these effects, countries which have not been named are going through a much more critical problem. I would like to put the names of a few of those countries on the record. These are countries which have potential but, because of the international economic situation, are either on the brink of bankruptcy or are bankrupt. These countries are Argentina, Chile, Nicaragua, Zaire, Upper Volta, Thailand, and many other countries around the world. Most countries around the world have economies which make ours look like a blessing.

In the House yesterday there was tabled the report of the North-South Committee Task Force, on which I had the privilege to serve. It was the unanimous report brought in by the members of all three parties in this House. If, out there in television land, there is anybody still awake, I would ask you to write your member of Parliament and obtain one of these reports. At the same time, ask if he or she has read it. If not, suggest he or she reads it.

I believe some of the things contained in this report have a great deal to do with what is happening in our country today. If, in trying to face the problems of our country, we do not put into the equation a fact which has not really been mentioned here tonight, then we will not come to a solution of the problem. The United States has been blamed for our high inflation and high interest rates. I believe that the countries which make up the rich sector in the world, in the north, have arrived at a time in history at which they have been calling the signals of the economic world ballgame and they can no longer do that unless they seriously take into account what is happening in the rest of the world.

I would like to take a moment to read into the record a part of the introduction to this report of the North-South Task Force. I hope it will lay to rest many of the myths which I think have been associated with the rich countries, in the minds of many people in the north. In the report we have written:

A Decade of Change

The starting point is the altering of images. Change often occurs faster than our ability to recognize it; North-South relations are no exception. We start with an image of a world divided between a powerful North and a weak and dependent South. This image is badly out of date.

There have been great changes in the past ten years. The most dramatic example is the emergence of OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Suddenly, without warning, the nations and the peoples of the North have been confronted with a fact of life long familiar to the South: dependency.