

Canadian Economy

● (1510)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**ALLOTTED DAY S.O. 58—ALLEGED GOVERNMENT
MISMANAGEMENT OF ECONOMY****Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond)** moved:

That this House considers the government has lacked foresight and leadership in the conduct of the affairs of Canada and should be blamed for its failure to fulfil its promise of a fair and just society and to prevent the deterioration of the social climate, and its failure to stop the alarming increase in unemployment, to introduce measures other than price and wage control, to prevent the actual rate of inflation and to make loans available to the provinces at an interest rate not exceeding the cost of administration.

He said: Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 58(4)(a), I move, seconded by the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert), the following motion:

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If I move such a motion today in this House it is because of circumstances forcing us to meet our responsibilities as parliamentarians. Elected representatives must remind this government of its lack of foresight in the administration of the country and warn it against serious consequences for the Canadian nation if it continues to show an attitude so unrealistic in its action. What I generally regret is that in recent years this government did not try harder to establish a preventive policy concerning current economic and social problems and rather let them grow to such a point that today's situation is almost unbearable.

I do not intend right now, Mr. Speaker, to discuss in every detail all the major points raised by a motion like the one I move today. I shall mention only the principles in question and draw the attention of the government to the present situation and possible solutions, leaving it to my colleagues to study the situation further in the analysis they will make following my comments.

When I say that a government must show some leadership, I mean that it must, first of all, set the example as concerns business, integrity, common sense, balance and fairness. It is its first duty if it really wishes to create among the people the feeling of confidence and respect necessary to the strength and the stability of a democracy.

But for too long this government has tolerated—I did say tolerated—contempt for government institutions, the declared intent of anyone to destroy our democratic system; this government has tolerated for too long record breaking deficits in its estimates and its external trade without reacting vigorously; for too long also inflation and unemployment have grown without being stopped and, to top it all off, we note a 100 per cent jump in federal government spending over the last five years. Then, where is the example set by this government in all this? Where is the example of an authority really wishing to create that

confidence necessary for the motivation of Canadians. This is the kind of leadership not shown by those who have governed this country for the last few years. On top of this lack of foresight and leadership, another negative factor adds to the record of the present government and it is the anti-democratic way to govern by procurement by avoiding this House as much as possible. During the sixties, the government decided to amend the rules and defer to standing committees several bills then considered in the House. One major result of those transfers was that expenditures were no longer examined by Parliament but by a committee where the minister responsible did not have to attend and where the same officials who worked up the expenditures have drafted the answers. The questions on policy issues put to the absent minister can be raised in the House, but the member is then referred to the committee without avail. Such a procedure does away with discussion and ignores democracy, but it does not reassure the citizen and give him confidence in his government.

In other respects, and this is not much better, the government has grown into the habit of having a legislation passed by the House reserving itself full discretion in making the regulations proceeding from it.

In any event, those regulations stemming from the bill may be more important than the bill itself, but the House would have no say in them. That drawback was actually aptly pointed at in the past few months by the Mining Association of Canada on page 6 of the brief on the anti-inflation program they submitted to the Standing Committee of Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs. I quote:

You still have no idea of the contents of the regulations on Bill C-73, and yet the government will derive from them every power they will use in their fight to curb inflation. We are therefore concerned that those regulations will be enacted pursuant to an order in council without the assent of Parliament. Although that procedure is technically right, we believe it is an objectionable practice in a democratic society, and should therefore be avoided inasmuch as possible. That practice seriously limits the powers of our committee and of citizens in general to assess government intentions.

That way of ruling by proxy, Mr. Speaker, undoubtedly makes people sceptical with respect to government management, and in my opinion, it means ignoring one's responsibilities and refusing to assume a real leadership.

On the other hand, the government stands on no firm grounds not only as far as political philosophy is concerned, but also with respect to action. They failed to anticipate inflation, much to the detriment of most people, since in the past three years 65 per cent of inflation has concentrated on housing, food and energy. Since it is a sector which relates to essential and basic needs, most citizens are therefore hit and cannot help it. Their buying power is directly undermined. The taxpayer is therefore the all-time loser, so that he develops the form of thought which he cannot be blamed for, but which also works against his interests. He comes to thinking that it is better to spend everything than save money. Such an attitude does nothing to slow down consumption or cut down unnecessary expenses, and therefore creates more difficulties.

We are not the only ones who have those problems, but we should have taken action much sooner, for the situation might deteriorate even further.

Several major industrialized countries had in recent years a rate of inflation fluctuating around 9 per cent. On