

which this Prime Minister voiced in 1968 and, having come to power, has systematically trampled. It is because of this, Mr. Speaker, that I wish to move, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles):

That the amendment be amended by changing the period at the end thereof to a comma, and by adding immediately thereafter the following words:

and in particular has taken no effective steps to relieve the serious unemployment situation that has affected Canadians in all parts of this country throughout its term of office.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, some might feel that I have a lot of nerve to speak on this day set aside for party leaders, but the leader of the Social Credit party (Mr. Caouette) is now in Regina to chair a quite important meeting of our party and he has asked me to speak in his place. However, the House will not be the loser, since the hon. member for Témiscamingue, the leader of the Social Credit party, will be among us next Monday and will have the opportunity to take part in the debate on the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I also wish to congratulate the mover and seconder of the Address in reply (Messrs. Whicher and Lajoie), because they have satisfactorily performed the thankless task entrusted to them. I said "the thankless task", because it must be difficult for anyone to praise during half an hour this Liberal government which has been in office for the last four years, considering the bad legislation which was passed, its mistakes and omissions.

On several occasions, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) stated that he did not want to be judged on his past administration—and I understand him—but that he would like the electorate to look to a rosy future under another Liberal government. The Prime Minister realizes that the colour of the Liberal party is less and less popular and he would undoubtedly like it to turn from red to pink.

If the Prime Minister regrets the past, the mistakes of his government during the last four years, he should say so. If he is simply asking us to forget them, he is making a big mistake, because the Canadian voters will tell him so at the next federal election.

How, indeed, could the Canadian people forget the unemployment which has raged under the Liberal government? Here is the government's unemployment record during the past four years, according to data from Statistics Canada on February 8, 1971 and volume 27, No. 1, of catalogue 1971-001:

Dec. 14, 1968 373,000 unemployed
Dec. 13, 1969 383,000 unemployed
Dec. 12, 1970 538,000 unemployed
Dec. 1971 530,000 unemployed
Jan. 1972 665,000 unemployed

This represents an increase of 292,000 from December 1968 to January 1972.

This means, Mr. Speaker, that in January, 7.7 per cent of the Canadian labour force was unemployed, compared with 3.9 per cent in 1965. There is the setback that we owe to the Liberal government of the three doves launched into the electoral sky in 1965.

Speech from the Throne

Today, during the oral questions period, we have seen that this government is still taking shelter behind the officials of the Unemployment Insurance Commission and saying that it is the unemployed, the claimants who are at fault.

Well, Mr. Speaker, over the holiday season, I myself have been flooded with calls and visits from claimants who were deprived of unemployment insurance benefits that they were entitled to because of a lack of understanding from officials of the Commission, mainly those who work at the central office in Montreal, behind an "electronic brain". Well, Mr. Speaker, these people were deprived of a right they had under an act of Parliament, through a misinterpretation by civil servants.

• (1550)

We could have expected, Mr. Speaker, that unemployment being so high, so many industries being closed or operating well under their capacity, prices would tend to drop. On the contrary, since the present government came to power in 1968, consumer prices have kept soaring. I have some statistics here dated February 17, 1972, that indicate the rate of price increases for December 1971 to January 1972, in the fields of food, housing, clothing, transportation, personal and health care, leisure and reading, drinking and smoking. For the city of St. John's Newfoundland, the price index between December 1971 and January 1972 jumped from 125.0 to 126.1, on the basis of 1961 equals 100. For the city of Halifax, this figure was approximately on the same level; for Saint John, New Brunswick, it rose from 126.9 to 127.4; for Montreal, 128.9 to 129.6; for Ottawa, 133.0 to 133.6; for Toronto, 131.6 to 132; for Winnipeg, 131.1 to 131.4; for Saskatoon and Regina, 125.6 to 126.3; for Edmonton and Calgary, 130.3 to 130.8; for Vancouver, 129.4 to 130.

Mr. Speaker, this shows that the cost of living for one month only continued increasing from December to January as it had during the preceding months.

According to these statistics, the consumer price index in Canada reached 136.7. In December 1969, it was 127.9; in December 1970, it was 129.8; in December 1971, it was 136.3 and today, it has reached 136.7, or an increase of 6.9 per cent over the last 13 months. This is how the federal government has failed in its fight against inflation. Prices are spiralling; families are ever more unable to provide for themselves and have to run into heavy debts, as does the government, by the way.

Here are a few eloquent figures regarding the indebtedness of Canadians to loan and finance companies. These figures are quoted from Catalog 61-004 of February 1972 and show the trend in the debt of Canadians since 1961. On December 31, 1961, this debt was \$4.314 billion in 1962, \$4.769 billion and in 1963, \$5.351 billion. That was when the Liberals took power.

In 1964 that debt amounted to \$6.143 billion; in 1965 to \$7.4 billion; in 1966 to \$7.648 billion; in 1967 to \$8.474 billion; in 1968 to \$9.704 billion; in 1969 to \$10.969 billion; in 1970 to \$11.525 billion.

Since 1961 the amount of money owed by Canadians to loan companies, finance companies and stores had nearly trebled. Since 1963—the year during which the liberals came to power—the indebtedness of Canadian consumers