

## Supply

**Mr. Stanfield:** I am not going to take up the time of the House this afternoon, Sir, to get into areas like regional economic disparity. Obviously, these measures do very little in connection with that. I will not take the time to emphasize the extent of the failure of the government's program in the area of diminishing regional economic disparity. For example, we have all seen the unemployment figures published for the month of January, and we can see a great disparity between unemployment rates in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec as opposed to Ontario.

A subject which is a little off my theme, but which I am glad to take up for a minute, arises from the question raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). He is inquiring about what position I have taken in relation to old age pensions. Of course, when I consider old age pensions, like the hon. gentleman who put the question, I am thinking primarily of the old age pensioner rather than of the economic consequences of increasing old age pensions, although those also are significant. The hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) earlier in the session, during the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, delivered quite a sweeping generalization on the same topic. He indicated that he could not find anything specific in the record that I had said about old age pensions beyond maintaining the present plan and removing the 2 per cent ceiling on the cost of living adjustment.

I appreciate that the hon. member for York South was not in the House last May 15 when I spoke on this matter in the budget debate, as you will find reported at page 2264 of *Hansard* for that date. I appreciate that he was not in the House when I spoke, although he was here later on in the afternoon to take part in the debate himself. But I must say I find it a little difficult to understand how the hon. member did not take the trouble to read what I did say. I want to remind him, and also the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, that detailed proposals and costing summaries relating to our policies on pensions were distributed in a mass way, including distribution to the media, and they were reported. This was done in May. We carried on with this position on pensions during the election campaign. That was the reference I made last night, when I said in fact that we had presented proposals regarding pensions.

In addition to those, and I emphasize that in putting these positions forward, and in still putting them forward, I do so as the minimum positions, as the very least that we should have done, since last August I have called for specific emergency provisions, aside from the standard pension provisions, to assist our old people who were bearing the brunt of the drastic increases in food prices. While hon. gentlemen to my left were promoting a committee to study food prices, I think also in association with a review board of some sort, this is what I was doing, Mr. Speaker. I was advocating some direct and immediate help to the people living on fixed incomes, to the people living on old age pensions, who were facing the increase in the cost of living and, in particular, the increase in the cost of food. This is our minimum position. We are reviewing this position with the budget coming up, and I will have more to say about old age pensions, as well as about other matters, in the forthcoming budget debate.

[Mr. Stanfield.]

I trust that the hon. member for York South and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, if they are unable to be in the House and do not have the privilege of hearing me in person when I speak during the budget debate, this time will be able to read afterwards what I had to say. I do not question their sincerity with regard to assistance to the older people, and I trust they are not going to question my sincerity, or the sincerity of my party in that regard.

The country is paying a very heavy price for the budget adopted last May, the first budget presented by the Minister of Finance. We are paying a very heavy price in terms of a disappointing rate of growth, a rate falling well short of the target set by the minister. We are paying a very heavy price in terms of unemployment which, seasonally adjusted, is as high as it was in January, 1972. And, of course, we are paying a very heavy price in terms of inflation which is running on a year to year basis at something in excess of 5 per cent.

There is nothing at all in these measures contained in the supplementary estimates, nothing at all more than some belated assistance to those caught by winter unemployment, and only to a small percentage of the large number of unemployed in Canada. There is nothing in these supplementary estimates to get the country on the right track. I hope I will not be accused of immodesty if I say we, speaking for this party, during the past couple of years and in particular during the last year, have been on the right track in terms of diagnosing the economic problems of the country and in terms of recommending very precise and appropriate methods to deal with them.

I expect there is a very good reason why the Minister of Finance cannot be in the chamber at the present time to hear my speech, but I can send him a copy of it later to read, and I hope he will adopt the suggestions that we have been making. I hope he will bring in some of the reforms in the tax system that we have been suggesting, some of which I have touched upon today, so that while the government remains in office, whether it is for a few days, a few weeks, or for as long as it may last, will begin to get the country moving in the right direction. I hope the government will begin to adopt a few of the measures that are appropriate to get the economy zinging along, get employment growing at an adequate rate, get unemployment down, and do something effective to deal with the problems associated with inflation.

• (1600)

**Mr. David Lewis (York South):** Mr. Speaker, I stayed to listen to the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) because of the promise I understood him to make earlier this afternoon that he would, when he spoke on this bill this afternoon, answer what was in the motion moved, not with tongue in cheek but very seriously, by my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles).

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Lewis:** The motion that could have been passed if hon. members of the Conservative party had had the courage to let it pass—

**Mr. Horner (Crowfoot):** That is not so, at all.