

*Inflation*

gimmicks, not any expression of views that there is a simple solution to the problem of inflation, because even a program of consensus will not provide a complete solution. Are we asking too much in asking the government to give the leadership that was promised to the people of Canada, and to tell us what it means by consensus?

There seems to be agreement in the House generally about the need for restraint. The hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge said that this was not only the government's fault, it was everybody's fault. I take it that this is what the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the Minister of Finance, and the government House leader have in mind when they speak about such a program.

With such a wide area of agreement in the House on the general nature of the problem and the appropriate approach, why can the government not tell us and the people of Canada what its program is? Why can we not move forward with this program? Why do we find ourselves in the absurd position, many, many months after this program of consensus was announced, with the House leader rising in the House and saying we are getting near the end of the first stage of the program? I say to the government House leader that we agree that there is no simple solution to this problem, we agree about the importance of maintaining employment, we agree about the importance of restraint, including restraint on behalf of the government, and we agree about the importance of consensus of enabling the various elements in our economy to achieve a consensus.

What we ask for is leadership on the part of the government to indicate to the Canadian people what restraint really means for them, what is really asked for from the various people of this country in the way of restraint. We want some indication as to what is appropriate patriotic behaviour on the part of individual Canadians in their various walks of life in this situation. That is what we ask for, and that is what we are prepared to support.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alan Martin (Scarborough West): Madam Speaker, before getting into the detail of my comments in this debate I would just like to say how honoured I have been two weeks in a row, on two opposition days, to have made my remarks immediately following the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield). I do not know what omen that portends, but I certainly find it to be a rare distinction for a new member of parliament.

Another comment I would like to make results from some private derogatory comments that did not find their way into *Hansard* but were directed my way by the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) last week, during a similar debate. He might be pleased to note that tonight I am not reading my speech. For the first time I rely only on a few notes. Whether that proves to be an advantage for those who are in this chamber and who will be listening to me, or who will read my comments later in *Hansard*, remains to be seen.

Third, I would like to say, for the benefit of the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker), that I intend to address my remarks directly to the motion that is before us tonight. I hope that that will keep him happy for the next few minutes.

[Mr. Stanfield.]

I would like to speak on the motion in two parts, as I have divided it. In the first part the Creditiste party deplores the inaction of the government in its fight against inflation. In the second part it further deplores the fact that the government has failed to support the Creditiste party in its proposal to give all Canadian consumers some form of compensated price on food products they may require.

Speaking on the first part of the motion let me say that, in my mind, it is not unlike the motion that was put forward in the House last week by the NDP in which they were also deploring the inaction of the government in its fight against inflation, and were indeed proposing that a new budget be brought to the House immediately, this at a time when the budget had received royal assent just two hours earlier.

The arguments that I made that evening are equally applicable tonight in the sense that a major new budgetary direction is being proposed. I do not think there is much point in repeating the same old points. It takes considerable time for the budgetary process to work its way into the economy, and I think we are only beginning to see the effects of the November 18 budget as they start to make an impact on the Canadian economy.

It is far easier for a party in opposition to say to the government that there has been inaction on a particular matter than to say there has been lack of action or too much action in a particular direction. Personally I do not fault members of the opposition for disagreeing with the economic policies that may be put forward by the party which forms a government. Indeed, one could argue that that is part of their responsibility, and I think it is fair for them to say that there is too little here or too much there. But I think it is rather unfair—and I submit in this case completely unjustified—to say that there has been no action.

Indeed, actions have been taken. I refer once again to the red booklet which is a summary of the November 18 budget, and I refer to some of the titles within that budget booklet where reference is made to actions to stimulate housing construction, actions to sustain capital investment, actions to reduce substantially personal income taxes, and actions to protect savings. I suggest that if those are not collective actions that tend to work against the problems of inflation, then I am not clear in my own mind what actions might so work. It is quite clear that they are actions designed for that particular purpose. So the implication that no action has been taken by the government in connection with the inflation problem is simply incorrect.

The other point that I think is worth making is that the actions that have been taken by the government in a number of instances were taken before actions undertaken by other governments of some major countries in the western world. I think this was where we showed leadership. Again I say that the question is not one of action versus inaction, but I suppose one could argue whether one form of action is more appropriate than another. To date the kinds of alternatives given to us by the opposition have really not amounted to very much in the form of substantial action.