

The Economy

borrow to finance production, inventories, sales, sales advertising. Our governments are doing exactly the same thing by going into debt, they pay interest on it and fuel inflation. The further we move ahead, the more they spend, the more taxes you pay, the fewer services you get in return. We have been calling for a reduction in interest rates on loans to an acceptable level of 5 or 6 per cent as it was in 1967 before this Liberal government blew the lid off interest rates and sent inflation on its way up. We also ask that governments be financed by interest free loans from the Bank of Canada. Those are solutions that would reduce administrative costs, production costs for businesses and enable us to start over again, put production and the economy back on a positive track and enable us at the same time to create jobs that are now being destroyed by the attitude of this government of applying a band-aid on a wooden leg.

Mr. Speaker, those are the few remarks I wanted to make, and I sincerely think that the creation of a committee to study those solutions would certainly not be the best way of solving this problem. But I think that if we really want to take major steps the population as a whole must make government understand that it is time for it to stop its interventions in all areas. As I often noticed in my tours, people are telling us: We are prepared to work, we are prepared to produce but ask government to stop scratching our backs and continuously taking away what we can produce. I think the government will understand through this motion that time has long since come for it to get off the backs of industrialists and businessmen, to allow them to live because they are the ones who can create productive jobs, not government, as it is now.

● (1622)

[English]

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, when some of my colleagues read the motion of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), they were somewhat critical of its content. When I was given the motion to read last night, I looked forward to this debate. I thought it could be potentially constructive. Some of the wording in the motion is current and topical, and the House should address itself to it. Having said that, I must say now, after listening to three speeches, particularly that of the Leader of the Opposition, that we have not advanced the theory or the practicality of the intent of this motion very far. We have heard some motherhood—or perhaps fatherhood—statements, but a very distinct lack of specific recommendations.

The Leader of the Opposition started off by hitting the high plane. He caught my ear and my fancy by saying that he would not be partisan, but then he proceeded to be very personal and very partisan. That was a slight disappointment.

In any event, the motion proposes that another parliamentary committee be struck to examine an area which is fundamental to parliament. It proposes another committee to do the job of the Public Accounts Committee. I think the Public Accounts Committee is doing very well and with increasing

[Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue).]

competence, and generally speaking—with some relapses from time to time—in a fairly non-partisan and constructive fashion. The motion denigrates the whole process of examination of estimates, which is made up of procedures which were endorsed and approved by this parliament.

Mr. Clark: Railroaded through.

Mr. Andras: The Leader of the Opposition criticized very selectively. He made reference to the 1976 report of the Auditor General, which nobody on this side of the House would parade before anybody with great joy. Admittedly, it was certainly a blast at the government in terms of financial control. However, that was very selective because the hon. member did not even make passing reference to the 1977 report of the Auditor General. If the hon. member had done that, he would have been a great deal more credible. Some opposition members in different parties have been straightforward enough to admit that the 1977 report pointed out that there was a vast improvement. As a matter of fact I heard one of them say—in the House, and it is recorded in *Hansard*—that it was one of the best he had seen in the many years he had been in parliament. It would have given the Leader of the Opposition a little more credibility if he had at least nodded toward the evidence the Auditor General offered of the beginnings of improvement and the good start which has been made. However, that is the way it goes.

The Leader of the Opposition made reference to the office of Comptroller General. I want to assure the hon. member that we will be debating this in more detail in the not too distant future. The appointment to this office is taken very seriously. The delay in finding and appointing a comptroller general is an indication of our agreement with the other half of the Auditor General's recommendation that, equally as important as the creation of the office, is the obtaining of the services of a fairly competent person whose competence is recognized. Our search for the right person is almost complete and I am hopeful that we can attract a very competent person from the outside.

● (1632)

The House might like to know that one of the interesting problems, which I shall not dwell upon, is that when you seek a competent person with the necessary credentials and experience in the outside world, then you are searching for someone with experience and earnings considerably above the very top level of salary offered in the federal public service. I say that in light of the often quoted criticisms of the level of pay offered public servants in this country. Six candidates were considered to have the qualifications, but we were faced with salary ranges \$30,000 to \$75,000 above the maximum range of top level senior public servants.

Mr. Paproski: Is that what Juneau is making now?

Mr. Andras: It has nothing to do with Juneau. That is utterly ridiculous. Mr. Speaker, there is no senior deputy minister in the federal government who is at the top range of the allowable maximum for senior deputy ministers.