

It is unfortunate that this country and this government have missed a golden opportunity to show the world that we can deal effectively with problems of inflation. The government should be doing a much better job because it does not have the same irritants that have faced other nations of the world. For example, it has not been faced with an energy crisis to the same extent as that which has faced the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan. This country has not had to fight a war in Viet Nam as did the United States, and we have not experienced a Water-gate fiasco. In spite of the lack of these irritants which have faced some of the other nations of the world we constantly hear from the government the suggestion that Canada is doing as well or better than other nations. I suggest we should be doing much better.

The United States administration has just enunciated eight different points in the fight to overcome its inflationary dilemma. More than half of the factors contributing to United States inflation do not affect Canada, so the government is misleading the public when it blames inflation on an international phenomenon. Such an approach is nonsensical and, I suggest, dangerous. It is not good enough to take comfort in the fact that we are better off than the United States, Japan or the United Kingdom. The failure of the government to deal effectively with inflation constitutes a major threat to the economic and social fabric of this nation.

Inflation affects everyone. Some can live with it, some can recover their losses, but some just cannot overcome the difficulties, particularly those who are unionized, the pensioners, the veterans, small businessmen and young couples. They are not able to overcome the impacts of inflation.

I should also refer to the farmers who are faced with increased input costs of the order of 20 per cent. It is true that food costs to the consumer have increased appreciably over the last few years, but the farmers' share has been constantly declining. Their share of the food dollar is now about 36 per cent, with the other 64 per cent taken up by marketing, processing and transportation.

We all know the experience of the livestock industry. The industry has never been in a more urgent state of turmoil than it is in Canada today. We are experiencing what is in fact a war with the United States in the movement of cattle across our borders. We all know the serious position the cow-calf operator finds himself in. This segment of the industry is fundamental to the survival of the beef industry.

We know the record of the government in its mishandling of the beef industry, with export restrictions and ill-conceived management of subsidies. We know of the manipulations and the interferences by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) and the government in respect of the beef industry. If there has ever been a body that has harmed the beef industry of this country, surely it is this government.

The government has destroyed confidence in this industry. Yesterday the Minister of Agriculture admitted in the House that he knew nothing about beef. He said he had never raised a beef cow in 20 years. It is obvious from the manner in which he has handled the beef industry that he has rarely seen a cow, let alone a bull.

The Address—Mr. Mazankowski

Considering the depressing prices of beef to the producer one must ask oneself why the price to the consumer continues to stay at such a high level? Perhaps it is time that Mrs. Beryl Plumtre made a report on this situation. It is certainly time that the government brought some stability and assurance to the beef industry. We do not need another marketing board; what we need is something now to help the cow-calf entrepreneur.

● (1530)

Several proposals have been advanced. The governments of the provinces have indeed advanced proposals which would be of assistance in respect of the cow-calf operations. I ask the Minister of Agriculture to tell the Canadian people and this House what he intends to do about cow-calf operations in this country. I ask him also for leadership in the matter of the movement of grain and in respect of labour disputes. Where is the leadership? Where was he when demurrage costs were piling up? Where was he when demurrage costs were piling up? There was a burden to the farmers during the railway strike. This amounted to \$10 million. Then another \$10 million was involved in respect of the grain strike on the west coast and on the Great Lakes.

Where was the Minister of Agriculture during these situations? He does not speak on behalf of the farmers. He acquiesces with the minister responsible for the Wheat Board. We have had the inflationary settlements of 65 per cent in respect of the Great Lakes, and 61 per cent in respect of the grain handling industry.

I am wondering what the policy of the government is in this regard because the other day the Minister of Finance suggested we should be careful because, in fact, there is a danger that settlements might go beyond that which is necessary to catch up with rising living costs. Wage increases over the next three years, according to projections about the rate of inflation, could ensure that there will be inflation in perpetuity.

If 61 per cent and 65 per cent are not inflationary, and do not accelerate inflation, I do not know what they are. We do not have a policy from this government containing any guidelines. Therefore we find ourselves in a situation where inflation will indeed get worse based upon the pattern set by this government.

So far as I am concerned the Minister of Agriculture has failed to defend the interests of the farmers of this country. He is submitting to his colleagues, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang). His speech in this House reflected that.

As a matter of fact it seemed as if the Minister of Agriculture has been pleading for some mercy. If the minister cannot stand the heat he should get out of the kitchen. I represent a large segment of agriculture in the country, as well as in my own constituency, and I shall not fall for his superficial humility. In my opinion agriculture, like the transportation system, is in the biggest mess it has been for a period of 20 years. I mentioned demurrage costs.

I want to repeat that the Minister of Agriculture should be making representations to the Prime Minister and his other colleagues in the cabinet to the effect that they should defray at least a portion of those costs which have