

[English]

Mr. John Wise (Elgin): Mr. Speaker, as I rise in my place to participate in this emergency debate this morning I wish to commend all the members of this House who have had the interest and enthusiasm and the concern to remain in their places, if not to participate at least to listen. I cannot help being reminded of a situation which I am sure hon. members have experienced from time to time. I refer to the situation where a person has a car, a truck, a tractor or some other commodity which turns out to be a lemon. In such a case he disposes of it at the earliest possible opportunity. Now an increasingly greater number of Canadians are discovering that the government is the lemon I mentioned previously and that it is high time it be discarded.

The consumer price index figures released this morning and the unemployment figures released on Tuesday, combined with the ever-increasing inflation we are experiencing, indicate that not only is the economy of this country being mismanaged but it is being mismanaged by a group of incompetent politicians. The feelings of the people of Canada would indeed be truly felt if a general election were called today, tomorrow or perhaps a week hence. We all know that the "Liberal-Democrat" party is afraid to face the electorate at this time. They know that the smaller portion of the coalition will disappear and that the larger part will be virtually thrown out of office.

No longer can we be content to accept the government's wait-and-see philosophy. No longer can Canadians be expected to be hypnotized with meaningless assurances by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner). We need action rather than part-time remedies or temporary measures. It is not the effect that needs to be cured—which is what the government in its blindness is attempting—but it is the cause. The cost of living figures released by Statistics Canada this morning show what Canadians have known for months: inflation is getting out of hand and we are being thrown back into the dark days of the twenties and the thirties.

God help us, especially since this situation could have been prevented. We have experienced the biggest monthly increase in the cost of living for 22 years, yet the government indicates that because this is a world wide phenomenon there is not too much they can do. It is as bad as the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) saying; "As the world turns, so does the universe unfold". It all means one thing—that the government is powerless to do anything and is quite prepared to sit and try to weather out the storm, holding hands with its partner in coalition. The patchwork of temporary relief measures introduced by the government will have virtually no effect on the increase in the cost of living.

● (0140)

I have been most disappointed up to this point. There has been no move to introduce legislation to help a group of people within our society who are being affected adversely by the spiralling rate of inflation and cost of living, that is citizens between 60 and 65 years of age. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) said on September 10 that he thought it strange that the Progressive Conservative party should support the government's so-called infla-

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tionary measures that were introduced last week and then be opposed to the way in which the government is approaching the whole situation. We will be the last to deny aid to those who need it, and since the government has given no leadership in the fight against inflation, the Canadian people need the help and support of the PC party more than ever.

If the government of this country thinks that a cure for inflation, for rising costs, and for unemployment can be found in temporary, patchwork policy, then we are in for a lot of trouble and hard and difficult times. No doubt it will take a Conservative government to put the country on its feet again. As my colleague, the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) said in the House yesterday, the increases that have been granted to the needy by the House do not even restore the buying power of family allowances to what they were in the years of the last Conservative government.

It worries me, as it worries hundreds of thousands of Canadians, when the government takes the attitude that nothing can be done about the serious economic difficulties facing us today. This assinine attitude adopted by the government toward the economy is being reflected in other areas of responsibility. The reason this country moved so rapidly into the challenges of the 1960's and 1970's was the strong sense of responsibility shown by the Conservatives in the late 1950's and early 1960's. What we need is more of the same type of leadership. What this country does not need is the arrogance and the could-not-care-less attitude of the government today.

Gradually the government has been coming around to our way of thinking. Bit by bit they have been taking parts of our economic platform and incorporating them in their own. We in this party are glad to be of service, not only to the people across this country but also to members of the party on the other side of the House. But what is not wanted is the jeering and abuse that has met our suggestions of price and wage controls. The total ignorance of many hon. members on the other side always comes to light when they start using such irresponsible arguments as comparing Canada with the United States and Great Britain. The hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies) gave an excellent speech on this subject last Monday. It was probably one of the most logical and rational speeches given in the House on the matter before us.

The economic proposals of the Trudeau administration back in 1968 and 1969 have failed. This is obvious from the high rate of inflation that we have today. It was thought then that to fight inflation one should slow down the economy. The result of course was massive unemployment the like of which this country has seldom seen before. Then, as a result of the attempt to fight rising unemployment, inflation bounded back. Rather than wait and try to ride out the storm, there are constructive steps which this government could be taking to deal with inflation. Time and time again these steps have been pointed out, but time and time again the government laughed and said no. Then, last week, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) announced certain selective controls, some of which I am sure will be financed from the pockets of the producers in this country.

It is not about time the government realized that something is wrong with the way in which they have been