

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that our industries be given more assistance and incentives to further increase their productivity and competitive position. A major factor in the strength of the Canadian economy is provided by exports. Although the government has in the past amended the export credit legislation, it should improve this legislation and develop programs which will help to sell more of our products throughout the world. This will also require the government to take bolder steps to strengthen our secondary industry.

In view of our rapidly growing labour force we must not become complacent even though the United Nations organization for economic development and other financial bodies have stated that Canada's economic performance is outstanding and that our industrial output has grown faster and prices have risen slower than in any other democratic country in the world. True, our dollar is strong. True, our economy is growing rapidly. However, inflation and prolonged strikes, if allowed to continue, especially in essential services, can endanger our economy as well as inconvenience the public.

At least twice a year in my regular report to the people of Parkdale I have included a questionnaire to ascertain their views on some urgent and important matters. The majority of those who replied expressed themselves in favour of some form of control of prices and wages to fight inflation, and also favoured compulsory arbitration in labour-management disputes especially where they concern essential services or the public sector. Recently, a prominent labour leader in the United States admitted that strikes are outmoded and that better ways should be adopted to solve labour-management disputes. People today appear willing to submit to controls and other restrictions in order to ensure a stable economy and to protect their jobs. We must protect the savings of our people, especially those living on fixed incomes, such as our senior citizens. I urge the federal government to fight inflation without producing unemployment.

Mr. Speaker, I think that most Canadians would agree that a major economic problem in Canada today is cost-push inflation, where increases in costs have exceeded increases in productivity. The schizophrenic state of our industrialized society, where big unions and huge corporations compete for survival alongside unorganized workers and small businesses, has contributed to inflation and especially to an economy which has been very difficult to manage with traditional economic theories and tools.

Today new theories and tools are needed. I believe this is a top priority need to which our government should give attention. This may mean a real change and, therefore, essential adjustments may be required in our life. It would be rigidity or stupidity if those responsible should refuse to make the changes and adjustments which are necessary to ensure an economy that would lead to full employment and, if possible, zero inflation. We should adapt to change more quickly. Our failure to do so will serve only to perpetuate chaotic economic conditions. Of course, we should not be so naive as to believe that these changes and goals can be achieved instantly. Any opposition party spokesman who promises to perform instant miracles is irresponsible and should not be trusted.

I also urge the government to protect the economy and consumers from the real causes and harmful effects of

Speech from the Throne

labour-management disputes. The right of an individual to bargain for his conditions of work and withhold his labour is part of the philosophical basis of the free enterprise economic system. However, we must always keep in mind that the concerted withholding of labour by employees as an economic weapon to pressure employers to accept their demands always has an indirect and adverse effect on the suppliers and consumers of the product or service. Moreover, when the effect of a strike is to deprive the public of an essential service for the carrying on of day-to-day living or to withhold from the public a convenience or essential service which is paid for by it through taxes, the public usually regards this as unfair or intolerable and pressures the government for protection and restoration of order.

Strike action, most of the time, benefits no one. Wages are lost, production comes to a halt and consumers who depend on the services or products are adversely affected. A strike is expensive to all concerned, including the innocent consumer. This is even more true when public servants withhold their labour. Those who accept employment with the government have a special responsibility to the public for whom they perform services.

• (1750)

Governments at all levels, and their agencies, Mr. Speaker, should devote more attention and resources to the problems of our retired citizens. More and more people are retiring at an earlier age, and retirement brings on personal and social problems. One solution to the personal problem faced by many older people trying to lead a useful and challenging life is to provide them with opportunities to help solve the problems of our society. The Canadian Executive Service Overseas program, under the sponsorship of the Department of External Affairs, is a step in the right direction.

I should like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to express our appreciation to the former minister responsible for urban affairs who has done a great deal to produce more housing and has come to the assistance of our cities in an imaginative way. In 1971, 220,000 housing starts were achieved, which is a record in our history. In the past three years of this Liberal government, more low-cost public housing was built than in the previous 20 years. But our government will not be resting on its laurels. It announced in the Throne Speech that it will be proposing to Parliament fresh concepts and continuing research in neighbourhood improvement, with emphasis on the need for low-cost housing.

I wish the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Basford) success in his new responsibilities and ask him to seek closer liaison with our rapidly growing cities. A fast-growing city, like my native metropolitan Toronto, encounters many problems and has many special needs. There are projects in Toronto involving the waterfront plan, metro centre, transportation and improved airport facilities which need major attention by the federal government. People in Toronto are asking for lower air fares, landing rights for more transatlantic air carriers and an early decision on a second airport to better serve the area's air travelling residents. I repeat my appeal to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) to give these matters his urgent and favourable consideration.