

that we in Atlantic Canada fall far behind the rest of the nation so far as income is concerned.

This was a company that was willing to try to assist raising the level of income in our part of Canada, yet it received a fine of shocking magnitude without there being at that time any kind of procedure for appealing the decision of the board. This is the kind of legislation we have before us, and it is the reason 25,000 people were marching outside this building today indicating their very real and sincere concern over what this legislation could do to them and their future livelihood.

● (1640)

I might say that one of the other indicators from the Atlantic provinces was touched upon in the question posed today by the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave). He was concerned about the kind of increases people in Nova Scotia are facing in their electric power bills. When we talk about 8 per cent, 10 per cent and 12 per cent increases, that is just fairyland talk as far as the electricity consumer in Nova Scotia is concerned. People in that province are facing increases of 300 per cent to 400 per cent in their electricity bills, and there is nothing in this legislation that protects them against the horrendous increases they are being forced to pay.

Indeed, a great many Nova Scotians today, because of increases in the electric power rates, are paying more in electricity bills than on mortgages on their homes. Unfortunately, I would have to say that the Nova Scotia Power Authority sucked in very many Nova Scotians when they convinced them to put electric heating in their homes. They told them it was a great bargain. These people are now facing bills of \$300 to \$400 for every two-month period, just for heating their homes; and they have no alternative: it is either electric heat or freezing. For many, it is going to be freezing sooner than later because they just are not able to pay this kind of power bill.

That is just one of the facts of life in Nova Scotia today. When the employee has the opportunity to catch up a little with his counterpart in the rest of the country, he is slapped down and the company he works for is also slapped down and fined for trying to assist him. On the other hand, when it comes to paying electricity rates in Nova Scotia, the employee has to pay 200 per cent or 300 per cent more than he was previously paying, and this legislation gives him no protection whatsoever.

Mr. Paproski: Shame! How can they do that?

Mr. Coates: The game here is credibility. How can this government expect credibility when it comes in with estimates indicating a 16 per cent increase in the amount of spending it intends to do in the next fiscal year, while trying to convince Canadians that it is trying to do what it can to restrain spending in this nation? This government says it has many joint sharing programs, it has this and the other thing, but it is really doing its best to cut back. Even if it is doing its best, government spending will cost taxpayers 16 per cent more this year than it did last year. All I can say to the government is, it had better look at some of its provincial counterparts. Every provincial government that has brought down a budget lately has indicated a much smaller increase in its estimate of expenditures than

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this federal government. Even the rich province of Alberta has indicated its credibility by paring its expenditures in an attempt to keep in line with a concept of restraint it feels is prudent for our nation at this time. We do not see that in the proposition the government is putting forward for its spending. We do not see that on the part of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) or his cabinet colleagues in their spending programs.

Let me refer to another aspect in an attempt to project to the people of Canada that we are really serious in the concern we have about what is happening in this nation. What is this government doing in its attempt to stop inflation by restraining itself in what it is doing? There is no better indication of what is happening in the federal government regarding the concept of restraint on the part of cabinet ministers and those who work for them in the public service than the type of opulence produced in their offices and in the way they look after themselves. This has nothing to do with members' of parliament or cabinet ministers' indemnities; it has to do with the way these people set up palatial surroundings so that when they leave this bear-pit they can go back to their offices and relax. This is a degree of opulence that is not available in even the boardrooms of the biggest corporations in this nation.

An hon. Member: Shame!

Mr. Coates: This is one of the things about which the people of Canada are really cheesed-off. While the Prime Minister and his cabinet colleagues run around this country telling us we should restrain ourselves and take it easy on spending for this and that, at the same time they phone and order this and that and something else for themselves in order that they may feel better when they leave the House of Commons and go to their offices. Even worse, this is like a cancer in that it spreads and ping-pongs right down through the ranks, with everybody else in the department saying, "If they can do it, why can't I?" They suggest that if it is good for the ministers, it should be good for them.

I am glad to see the Postmaster General (Mr. Mackasey) here, because he certainly looked after himself regarding his House of Commons office. In the last two or three years he has renovated his office at a cost to the taxpayers of this country of \$16,868.22. That is not bad for a fellow who is restraining himself. He is not unique in this regard. The man who really should be setting the pace, as far as I am concerned, is the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Drury). When he is not on the telephone he should be speaking to some of the people who work for him, telling them to set examples for other government departments in order that they might produce a degree of austerity that would be an indication not only to his colleagues but others in the public service. The Minister of Public Works, in the last two years, has purchased new furnishings for his departmental office at a cost of \$1,527. By itself, that is not too bad; but he decided to renovate his office at a cost of \$3,920. He was not satisfied with just his departmental office and thought that while he was at it he might as well renovate his House of Commons office at a cost of \$7,750. His deputy minister then said to himself, I presume, "If he can do it, I can do it too," and he proceeded to renovate his office. I think he said, in effect, "double or nothing," because he