

Interim Supply

special study to be made. In view of the urgency of the problem it seems to me fantastic, it now being the end of May 1966, that we still have not had even an elementary report from the Economic Council of Canada on the subject.

It is about time that the Canadian public began to realize that this government does not care about the high cost of living. Or if it does care, it is not prepared to do anything concrete about it. It is about time the public realized that the government of this great Liberal party is essentially reactionary and lackadaisical. I think back to the last election campaign and the promises made by Liberal candidates. Even the Liberal candidate in my own constituency, a very fine candidate and a very able person, went around telling the people about the wonderful things that his government would do if re-elected, particularly in the area of the high cost of living.

Mr. Nicholson: Especially if they had a majority.

Mr. Scott (Danforth): There we go, Mr. Chairman; the old jazz all over again, that the government must have a majority. They have a *de facto* majority in this house and have had ever since they were elected in 1963. It is a lot of nonsense to pretend that the lack of a majority has prevented the government from governing. The only thing which has prevented them from governing is that they do not know what they want to do, and are not prepared to give any leadership to the country. That is why they cannot govern.

Mr. Douglas: They cannot make up their minds.

Mr. Scott (Danforth): Well, Mr. Chairman, one wonders at times whether they have minds to make up. Yet there has not been a single constructive piece of legislation, let me tell the Minister of Labour, which has not met with the general approval of this house. Indeed the opposition spends most of its time urging the government on to greater activity and action, pleading with it to give some leadership.

During the last election campaign, those of us who had an opportunity to travel in Canada found ourselves being asked by the people: Where is the leadership in Ottawa? Why cannot we have leadership from the government? This is just as true today, Mr. Chairman, as it was in the election campaign.

An hon. Member: Same old bunch.

[Mr. Scott (Danforth).]

Mr. Scott (Danforth): Someone to my right says "same old bunch". I do not know whether it is the same old bunch; I hear that phrase so much that I do not know what it means any more. I do not know which "old bunch" is being talked about. Because in 1962 when the Liberals were in opposition and the Conservatives were in power the same old cry went back and forth about the same old bunch. So I suppose it applies to those who occupy the treasury benches at any given moment.

However, Mr. Chairman, I have digressed a little from what I wanted to say. I suggest that one of the problems of the high cost of living is knowing what type of proposal one should make. I would suggest to the hon. member for Prince Edward-Lennox, who I know is concerned about the problem, that he does not go far enough when he talks merely of removing the 11 per cent sales tax on production machinery and building materials. This is an important issue, one on which the opposition has carried the fight for several sessions now. However, if you really want to try to do something about the cost of living, Mr. Chairman, it seems you will have to go a lot further.

Great jurisdictional problems are involved in this problem, of course, since any effective price control system would probably require co-operation and concurrent legislation on the part of the provincial governments. There are things which the government could do but which it has steadfastly refused to do. On various occasions we have proposed that at least one step in the right direction would be the creation of a department of consumer affairs. I should like to see it broadened into a department of urban affairs, but one step in the right direction would be the creation of a single department presided over by a full-time minister, who would devote all his energy to the whole area of consumer affairs in Canada.

After all, Mr. Chairman, \$26 billion a year is spent by the consumers, so it is a matter of more importance to the general public than any other government department, whether it be health and welfare, national defence or labour. Yet we have been totally unsuccessful in trying to convince this government to take this first step. Every other pressure group in Canada has a department to speak for them. There is the Department of Labour, the Department of Industry, the Department of Trade and Commerce and the Department of Agriculture. All of these departments look