

still with us and unemployment has increased disastrously since 1968. Yes, I say inflation is still with us, despite the announcement of the Prime Minister some 14 months ago that it was licked.

What has the government done? On behalf of the old age pensioners, the government continues to behave as if there were no inflation in this country. The government froze the basic pension and froze the increase in the supplement for the neediest senior citizens at a paltry two per cent a year, regardless of how much the actual cost of living might go up during that year. In its courageous war against the dragon of inflation, the government has put the pensioners in the vanguard of the battle. It was said a few years ago in connection with what was called the war against poverty that there was never a shot fired. I must admit that in the war against inflation at least two shots have been fired, one against the unemployed and another against the older people of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: The Prime Minister, on a number of occasions, in defending his so-called war on inflation said he was motivated by his government's concern for the little people. Forget for a moment about the hundreds of thousands of little people thrown out of work through the government's deliberate policy of slowdown. This had to be done to protect the interests of other little people we were told, people on fixed incomes, our pensioners. By virtue of the government's legislation, overall a pensioner with no other income is only allowed a maximum annual increase of less than one per cent of what he receives.

We are all well aware of what has happened to retail food prices alone since the government enacted its revised old age security legislation. The tragedy of a pensioner in this country trying to keep pace with that kind of price increase, with no other income but a pension that only increases at a rate of less than 1 per cent per year, is shameful.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: The thought of it should fill us all, particularly the government, with a deep sense of guilt and a will to correct this inhumane situation as quickly as possible, but I hear no sounds of guilt from the government. Indeed, yesterday the hon. member for Bruce stated that our senior citizens had achieved the just society in Canada.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: I hear no more mention of even those little people from the Prime Minister. Regrettably, there is no indication in this Speech from the Throne that the government intends to correct this terrible injustice. How can this government be taken seriously in its glib platitudes about isolation when it ignores the isolation of so many Canadians who have made their contribution and deserve at least humane treatment? The plight of the old age pensioners is much like the blight of unemployment. The Trudeau government knows how to cause it, but does not know how to cure it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speech from the Throne

Mr. Stanfield: About a year ago I travelled across Canada to highlight the plight of the jobless.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: I want to assure the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Guay) that I was very closely in touch with what was happening. I was glad to hear the announcement of the legalization of marijuana. When I travelled across the country a year ago I did not profess to know all the answers to the unemployment situation. But at that time the government refused to admit that a problem even existed. Our party had four or five constructive suggestions to offer.

• (1230)

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) is again making general allegations that he cannot substantiate. I should like him to retract a statement he made that while he was on holiday in Guadeloupe he heard I had said that marijuana was to be legalized. That is untrue, and I think the hon. gentleman should retract that statement. I never said anything of the kind. If he heard it while he was on holiday it goes to show he was not—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think the House should be allowed to hear the Leader of the Opposition pursue his speech. It is a long-established rule that hon. members have to accept the word of another hon. member. I do not think this matter should be the subject of further debate.

Mr. Stanfield: I do not wish to be unfair to the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Guay); it is the last thing in the world I want to be. I feel very friendly toward him. He is a great help to me in the House.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: A year ago we were trying to persuade the government to show some real interest and take some constructive action in fighting unemployment. We made some suggestions for getting the economy rolling again. At that time the Prime Minister called me Canada's chief doomster. In effect, though, he admitted I was right when ten months later his government cut taxes, even though it was then too late for this measure to bite into the heavy burden of unemployment Canada is carrying and will continue to carry for the rest of this winter; indeed, too late to achieve even a 4 per cent rate of unemployment prior to the middle of 1974, according to the Economic Council of Canada.

A year ago, the government pretended the problem did not exist. This year we have two new responses from the government. The Prime Minister says there are lots of jobs around. He says there are lots of "help wanted" ads. I do not know when he started to read them. For a while I suspected he had begun a course in statistical optimism sponsored by the former minister of finance. But I have to assume there just might be something in what the Prime Minister is saying when his old friend Pierre Vallières found a good job so easily. Second, we find the new Minister of Manpower (Mr. Mackasey) keeping up a brave front as he is faced by the shocking foul-up in getting unemployment insurance payments out in decent time.