

The Canadian Economy

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: I can remember the four horsemen of the Apocalypse sitting on this side saying to the then government the same things I am now saying.

Mr. Cafik: Geography might have something to do with it. It depends on where you sit.

Mr. Nielsen: Tell that to the hundreds of thousands who are unemployed in the country. It does not make any difference where they sit. The hon. member should tell that to his constituents.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: That member should not be interjecting.

Mr. Cafik: We are as concerned about unemployment as you are.

Mr. Nielsen: That is fine, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. member is concerned, he will get up on behalf of his constituents who are more than hard hit by the unemployment problem in the country.

Mr. Cafik: I intend to do that.

Mr. Nielsen: If he is not spineless, he will get up and do that.

Mr. Cafik: If you will sit down and give us a chance, we will all have a go at it.

Mr. Nielsen: This is rule by divine right. They all have it over there. It is symptomatic of the Liberal party. They believe that only they have the answers. They believe that only they are right. They believe that only they have the right to speak. They believe that any legislation that comes before this House should be approved without even a whimper from the opposition. They do not understand the workings of a democratic institution such as Parliament. That stupid interjection by the hon. member is evidence of that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: He supports the lawbreakers.

Mr. Nielsen: The Temporary Wheat Reserves Act is just one example of how they are breaking the law. Another document which demonstrates this was tabled in the House on October 8. Members should look at it if they think the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act is an isolated example. The Auditor General is so ashamed of the Northern Canada Power Commission's financial report that he will not even certify it; he does not think it is in compliance with the law.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) spoke of the rosy situation. In his last paragraph he said that the economy is strong and growing. According to him and his supporters, we do not have to worry at all. On September 7, 1971, as recorded at page 7580 of *Hansard*, the Minister of Finance said:

We are confident that the trend will be that unemployment will continue to decline as the economy gathers further strength. My hon. friends opposite know this will happen, and I hope that the Leader of the Opposition, who guaranteed that unemployment would not go below 6 per cent this year, will turn his leadership

over to the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings when it does.

It has not. The Minister of Finance was not only wrong in making that statement last September, he was less than honest. As recorded at page 6908 of *Hansard*, the minister said:

As to the problems of right now it is evident that unemployment is too high. There is too much slack in the economy. At the same time, costs are still rising at a rate that causes concern about future price developments. It is evident also that these problems are interrelated. They must be treated and solved together. I am sure that we turned the corner last year, and despite some apparent hesitancy are now clearly on the way up.

Some "up," Mr. Speaker!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please, I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but I do so to advise him that his time has expired.

Mr. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): If I understood correctly the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) this evening, Mr. Speaker, he said that he approved of the measures announced but said they should have been implemented sooner. He approved of the measures to the extent that he tried to take credit for them. I would like to deal with both these points.

First, in terms of expanding employment in a free, mixed economy such as ours there are only so many alternatives from which to choose. No matter how many economists we read, we note that more or less the same alternatives are listed time and time again. It is a question of mix and of degree. During the last few months the Leader of the Opposition has suggested all of the alternatives. It is not difficult for him to state this evening that he has suggested these matters before in a general way. If you recommend everything, Mr. Speaker, you are bound to come up with something right from time to time.

Second, his criticism with regard to timing is more serious. He says that our forecasting is poor and that these measures should have been implemented sooner. I admit that timing is the most important element in administering economic policies of this nature. I am not convinced that, given the information which was available, the timing was wrong. It is easy now, after the fact, to claim that the timing was wrong, but on June 18 when the minister presented his last budget, all the indicators were up. At that time there was no way of predicting the United States surcharge. This evening I got the impression from the opposition that in their view the surcharge had not affected the situation in any way. But a few weeks ago, if I read them correctly, they were saying the opposite. Anyway, at the time of the budget there was no way of predicting the United States actions and no way of predicting the worsening of the unemployment situation as it affected young people.

• (10:10 p.m.)

I remember very well the reports which appeared in the newspapers after the June budget and the opinions expressed by economists. There was almost unanimous agreement that it was an expansionary budget, that it was what the economy needed. I think it is important that I should remind hon. members of some of the statistics