

Economic Policies and Unemployment

• (4:40 p.m.)

Opposition critics are aware of the destructive effects of runaway inflation. I am interested in the experience of our Socialist friends in Britain. Harold Wilson told the British people that they might even have to go through a spell of unemployment before the government reached its economic goals. This is what he told them in Britain, and they did suffer unemployment. Hopefully, they are working their way out of that difficulty at the present time. Yet the Socialist party here attacks the government because unemployment levels are higher than normal.

Members of the official opposition in particular are aware of the effects of soaring inflation. Yet they appear to welcome loose money despite the hardship it would impose on the poor, the deprived and the underprivileged. On one hand they call for government restraint in spending. How often have they denounced the government in this House for what they have termed profligate and wild spending? Yet in the next breath they advocate expenditures on a scale which if accepted would increase the taxes of every Canadian workingman.

They call for lower interest rates, completely disregarding the fact that most of our economic woes are being created in the United States where the financing of an expensive war has been superimposed on a peacetime economy, resulting in a wave of inflation which cannot be kept outside Canada. The sound economists in the opposition ranks have not been vocal in this debate because they know these things to be true. They realize that this is a difficult time for all of North America. Some of the critics have called for new government initiatives but they have found it impossible to advance new ideas on their own behalf. The other day the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) was confronted with this situation. He said it was not the job of the opposition to propose ideas; it was the job of the government. Mr. Speaker, in a modern democracy it is everyone's job to contribute to the bank of good ideas.

Some of the opposition members have told Canadians for years that they are in favour of tax reform. Some of them, including in particular the members of the official opposition, have been saying for years that they want greater equity in our taxation system. Now they say they will not stand for tax reform. The white paper on taxation has been made a subject for scorn. They ask for its withdrawal—yet they offer no alternatives.

Meanwhile, the poor, the underprivileged and the weak, about whom they profess to be concerned, look to them in vain. Not one idea has been advanced by the official opposition which would result in greater equity in taxation. The Leader of the Opposition who should spend a greater part of his time in the House suggesting ways in which the white paper proposals could be amended, is, instead, galloping around the country on a rubber-chicken circuit saying he wants the white paper thrown out, and the people who pay \$100 to get in bang their tables when he does so.

I come from a province where, it is true, many are unemployed. Nevertheless, many come to British Columbia from other provinces to seek work. If the present measures fail to stimulate employment in British Columbia, as in other provinces, I hope the government will alter its policies. But let no one suggest there has been a lack of new concepts. I think the time has come for the opposition to state explicitly what they are prepared to support. We need something more than inflamed oratory of the kind some of them have employed in this debate. Will they urge acceptance of voluntary guidelines on wages, prices and profits?

An hon. Member: No.

Mr. Winch: Will you?

Mr. Perrault: Will the leader of the NDP, for example, urge the Canadian Labour Congress to accept voluntary guidelines in connection with wages? Will the leader of the Conservative Party urge the acceptance of voluntary guidelines covering prices and profits as far as industry is concerned? Or do they ask for compulsory control of wages, prices and profits? They should state their attitude explicitly, because the Canadian people have a right to know which measures the opposition will support. The people know what they are against, but few of them know what they will support. The fact is that some of the most vocal opposition members are visibly overdrawn on the bank account of ideas. This is unfortunate because we require their very best thinking to assist, at least in part, the efforts of the government to carry out its mandate.

A few minutes ago one of the speakers in this debate drew attention to what was happening in other countries. I think he was one of our friends in the Socialist party. He said that other countries were setting an example