

Canadian Economy

of the times. So speaking as one member, a backbencher, without the same amount of experience in the House as the hon. member, I personally do not object if it is on security reasons that we MPs have to walk a few extra feet, so long as there are legitimate reasons, and I am sure Your Honour will find that out in your investigation.

Let me go back to the subject of economics. I started to say that I was disappointed in the speech, frankly, and in the motion. I think it is a rather frivolous motion for a very serious subject.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Waddell: The hon. members from the Liberal party need not say "hear, hear!" I will get to them in a moment.

The reason I think it is frivolous is in the mention of the finance minister being in Gabon. Since he is in Africa, I might use the analogy of a big game hunter going to shoot an elephant and aiming for the elephant's toenail. There is so much for this government to aim at on its economic record that it seems to me to be—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Waddell: I note the Liberal members are also saying, "hear, hear!" There is so much to aim at in the economic record of this government, with just about the highest interest rates there have ever been, with an inflation rate which is topping 12 per cent, with people who are unemployed, with a housing market of crisis proportions in Vancouver, where I live, with a rudderless ship and no economic policy. So why pick on the finance minister's going to Gabon? As a matter of fact, I understand there may perhaps be a split in the Conservative party. I understand that one half of the party wants the finance minister to return from Gabon and the other half would like him to stay in Gabon! We have the same problem.

An hon. Member: Same difference!

Mr. Knowles: Where is the hon. member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens)?

Mr. Waddell: I tried to listen to what the hon. member for York-Peel was saying. He said that the government was indifferent to the average Canadian, and I agree with that. I wonder, though, whether he was any more different when he was in power, or whether he would have done anything more. It seems to me that, if anything, he might have been even a little cooler in slashing social spending. That is why they call him "the slasher", I suppose; but I want to deal not with name-calling but with particular economic positions which were put forward, for a change, in this House.

It seemed to me that the position the hon. member for York-Peel put forward was that the government is a big spender and that is what causes inflation. That seemed to be what he was saying. Other than asking for a budget, that was the whole basis of his speech. It seems to me that that is too simple a position; it depends on what the government spending is for. If the government just gives away money, simply allows

write-offs and tax loopholes and gives subsidies to companies which perhaps do not need them, as in northern oil and gas exploration, for example, I think that kind of giving away of money is wrong. There is perhaps too much fat and idleness in our tax system in our country in some of those giveaways.

However, when the government is spending money for investment purposes, I think that is very important. I am sure, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has pointed out in this House, if we did not have those welfare programs, those spending programs for what are generally called social welfare matters, at these difficult economic times with these high interest rates, we would have some real social problems in this country. So I do not regret that that money is being spent.

I understand other countries have big deficits, such as Japan. I do not see the hon. member for York-Peel running around saying they do not follow the proper economic policies.

Second, there is a certain myth here which the hon. member for York-Peel puts forward. It is a kind of contemporary American myth. I will send him over an article by Joseph Kraft which appeared recently in the *Washington Post*. He was writing about the American space success of the shuttle. He writes:

● (1420)

Americans hunger for public achievement, but also seek to reduce the power of government.

Later in the article he writes:

—the anti-government approach seems highly unlikely to yield the advertised results. Some of the most prized objectives simply lie beyond the reach of private effort.

He refers to space exploration. It is inconsistent in many ways for the hon. member for York-Peel to take the American position, to cut back on government, because there are certain things that even some of the American people, who want government cut back, still want to have.

Mr. Kraft, who is hardly a socialist journalist, goes on to say:

The free enterprise system excludes other goals. Does anybody believe the mining and chemical companies are going to keep the water and air clean without a shove from government? Who can imagine that reducing funds to the cities will improve police work, or transit services, or local education?

You cannot have it both ways, Mr. Speaker, and that is where the hon. member is inconsistent. I thought this government was cutting back federal spending. What is the federal-provincial fiscal arrangements task force doing? It is there to cut back on public spending. The Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) wants to cut back funds to the provinces for education and health. This government is cutting back, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, the big struggle in Canada in the next few years will be in this third theatre of war, the first theatre being the Constitution and the provinces and the second being energy and the provinces. The third one will be the government's attempt to cut back on money given to the provinces for education and health.