

Interim Supply

Canadian towns and villages. The chartered banks have always been a ready and reasonable partner in the building of Canada and in the building of its communities.

We await the Bank Act amendments, and they should be such that our local branches of the chartered banks could compete with the finance companies. In this way, the banks would be permitted to serve at reasonable rates of interest those sections of our consuming community. The banks of course would have to raise their interest rates to compete and to play this lucrative outfield that for years has been the exclusive stamping ground of the finance companies. Let us put an end to the exploitation of this vast section of the consuming public by legislation that will allow the chartered bank on the downtown corner to serve all classes of consumer credit.

Let us put an end to the exploitation of these people, put an end to these 18 per cent and 20 per cent interest rates which are paid on the purchase of cars, furniture and household appliances—yes, I have even known interest rates that high on building mortgages. I know that credit is a two way street. As a Conservative, I contend that if we allow the banks to raise interest rates on moneys advanced for consumer credit, they will also be obliged to pay more on money on deposit. Let us, as soon as possible, introduce legislation that will improve the lot of consumers in Canada. The consumer is the person who keeps Canadian business prosperous.

Mr. Scott (Danforth): I realize there is a general understanding that the interim supply bill might pass very quickly, but I want to congratulate the hon. member for Prince Edward-Lennox upon raising this issue this morning. I want to support him as strongly as I can and I would hope that members of the opposition in all parties would take advantage of this opportunity to redress this grievance against the Canadian public by exercising the traditional right of parliament to refuse supply to this government until we receive some substantial statement as to what the government intends to do to deal with the crushing burden of the high cost of living. Nothing, I suppose, is more important in the minds of the public than the high cost of living. I suppose there is not a member in this house who does not receive letters every day from old age pensioners, from people on low incomes, pleading that something be done, that this government give positive leadership to deal with this question.

• (12:10 p.m.)

I do not want to take the time now to deal with the tales of fantastic hardship from which these old age pensioners suffer because of the increased cost of living. Only this morning, Mr. Chairman, the *Montreal Gazette* carried a story to the effect that Canada faces more serious labour disputes now than at any time in the last decade. One of the main contributing factors to unrest in the labour movement is the spiralling cost of living. Workers' wages simply cannot keep up with the increased cost of living, and consequently they are attempting to negotiate higher wages. This increase in cost of living is one of the root causes of labour unrest at the moment.

The hon. member for Prince Edward-Lennox discussed the various groups in our community who are adversely affected; and the other day the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway presented to the house a concrete proposal that we thought would have contributed to a solution of this basic problem. But, Mr. Chairman, one despairs at times of ever being able to move this government. One wonders what degree of eloquence or what facts and statistics are required to get through to the treasury benches of this house. We are now facing a problem, as I have said, which affects every Canadian. How does one convince the government that the Canadian public simply cannot continue in this way? They are getting desperate because of the spiralling cost of living.

This government, Mr. Chairman, seems to have cash registers for hearts. It seems to be a waste of time appealing to them to take action of a concrete and constructive nature to deal with this problem. How does one convince the government? I for one despair. I would have thought that all the debates which had taken place in the house since we reassembled after the election, and the numerous occasions upon which the opposition, and I am sure in private members of the government, have tried to emphasize the nature of the problem, would have had some effect. Instead every time the matter is raised, either on orders of the day or by motion, it is sloughed off by the government.

We have not yet received the report of the Economic Council of Canada for which we have been waiting over a year. I think it was in March 1965 that the Prime Minister, in response to my leader, said that he had referred the whole question of prices, price controls, etc., to the Economic Council for a