

*Cost of Living*

we face and the differences we seek to overcome through mutual co-operation. For any member of parliament who has spent time in his constituency, clearly the greatest danger which unites all Canadians at this time is that presented by the rising cost of living coupled with inaction on the part of the government.

Having returned to my constituency, I know this is the chief concern among the people I have the honour to represent, and I would like to point out that I have the honour to represent a riding called Hamilton-Wentworth which many people assume from its name falls in its entirety within the city limits of the great city of Hamilton. It does not do so. Fifty per cent of the constituency in terms of voters does fall within the city, but it also extends to the suburbs and beyond that to farming areas. So in the constituency of Hamilton-Wentworth there is a tremendous cross-section of urban dwellers and those involved in the great industry of farming.

There is a common concern among all the people, whatever their occupation, whatever their background. Surely it is the cost of living, surely it is a growing sense of desperation that the cost of living continues to rise, perhaps even to the point at which it is getting out of control, while the present government does nothing about it. If responsibility rests with anyone, it must surely come down on the federal government in the first instance, which in addition to supposedly having the trust and the mandate of the Canadian people is also the nation's biggest single spender and one of the chief agents of inflation in the country today. But rather than provide the leadership one expects from a government, we heard today—or, rather, yesterday—in questioning in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) assure us that the government has reacted to the situation which confronts us and will continue to react. It is not the purpose of government to react. The purpose of government is to lead. The government has failed miserably to discharge its responsibilities in that regard.

As I have said, in the constituency which I represent there is a vast cross-section and all those people are affected severely by the rising cost of living. On Monday last, when this party brought before the House of Commons a motion of non-confidence, the Leader of the Opposition expressed a feeling which I think is shared by many members. I should just like to quote the words of the Leader of the Opposition as they appear in *Hansard*. They affect those who are severely hit by inflation. He said:

There are those in Canada who have no powerful trade union or trade associations, who have no levers to pull, who have no means of adjusting their incomes to meet their demands of an increase in prices and rates of interest. They are the great majority of working Canadians and their families.

The leader of my party went on to say:

This government is not kept here by public confidence. It is not maintained in office by faith and trust in their policies. They are not kept here because events have proven them right in their judgments and in their management of the country's affairs. They are kept here for the political convenience of a group of members in this House. As long as they are here, members of the government will keep improvising policies of political convenience.

The Leader of the Opposition in those words expressed the frustration felt by an ever-growing segment of the Canadian population which must meet the cost of living

and which does not have the means of assistance open to other segments of the population. That segment which bears the biggest share of the burden looks to the government and to the House of Commons for help and leadership, and because of the attitude taken by the government it is not only despondent and disillusioned, it is not only facing increasing economic difficulties, it is experiencing a loss of faith in the future of this country, which perhaps is the greatest tragedy of all.

If one considers this country in an over-all context, there really is no excuse for the situation we face today although the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) and the Prime Minister do their best to offer flippant and sometimes insulting excuses. The fact is that this nation, once the most vibrant of lands, offering challenges which no other nation could offer to a people, offering opportunities which no other generation and no other people could ever dream of, has now been crippled because its economy has stagnated under a government which insists on clinging to outdated, outmoded and irresponsible policies. Rather than providing leadership, the Prime Minister says we will react when it becomes necessary.

One of the most cruel ironies about the rise in the cost of living and the inaction on the part of the government is that the segment of the population to which the country owes so much is sometimes the most drastically affected. Of course, I am referring to Canada's senior citizens. In harsher times than I shall ever know and, pray God, that any other generation shall ever know, they served this nation through hard work, putting forward their best to develop a land based on the simple belief that through hard work they could better themselves and make life a bit better for those who would come after. For some of them, twice they were called to put their lives on the line for their country, and twice they responded. And today the senior citizens of Canada are almost neglected by the government except when public outrage forces the government to a trade-off on the basis of the minimum it can get by doing something for the maximum number of voters. Surely it is time for our senior citizens to stop being treated as political pawns and to start enjoying the type of life to which they are entitled, and time for some of us to attempt at least to repay the debt which perhaps none of us can ever really repay to them.

During this debate and during the past days in the House of Commons we have heard many speeches, but perhaps none has been as interesting or at least as challenging in trying to follow the logic of, and if one might be generous, the substance of those speeches delivered by members of the New Democratic Party in trying to justify their position. In particular there were diatribes emanating from the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) who seems to get by with the over-all attitude of stating as eloquently and forthrightly as he is renowned to do, "Mr. Speaker, these are my principles, but if the government doesn't like them I have others".

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The fact is that against the wishes of the government and the NDP there will come a time, under our democratic system, when the Canadian people will have an opportunity to express their opinion of what has taken place in terms of the economic mismanagement of this country. I