

Cost of Living

Mr. Blais: I do not pretend to be an economist. I should like to indicate that most of the people I represent are not economists and therefore need some enlightenment concerning what the position is. I might indicate that that enlightenment is not coming from the opposition benches. One has only to recognize that economics is a great, complex science. Although it includes a very pure science, namely mathematics, it also includes the human element. Judging from the rowdiness and the gargantuan proportions of the "monkey-business" being performed by the members of the opposition benches, it would appear that economics is a very wonderful science indeed, for one can never tell what folly next shall befall humanity. There is some silence at the other end. I suppose they are waiting for another gem. We are dealing with the human element and the human psychology. The Liberal government has recognized that it must tread a very fine course. We must maintain an equilibrium and really walk on a tightrope.

An hon. Member: You sure do.

Mr. Blais: That has been recognized because the maintenance of economic equilibrium is a very difficult feat. I avoided the depression. I was lucky. I was born after the depression. I see some older gentlemen on the other side who have lived through it. Surely, they ought to know that the economy of Canada has been a sequence of booms and busts. They also must recognize that the causes of these booms and busts have not been determined. Surely, we would have avoided them had we known the exact causes. It has been recognized that the particular economic condition we face now is a completely novel situation. The face of the earth on which we live is changing with the increase in the facility of communication and therefore the whole phenomena is a brand new one. Surely, we will not attempt to use time-worn measures by which we might become involved in a situation which could result in considerable difficulty. I would suggest that if we are to adopt or espouse radical measures we might very well aggravate the problem rather than lessen it. Therefore, the government has learned from past experience. It has carefully reviewed the measures taken last year. It has adopted a course which seems to be the reasonable one, notwithstanding the views of gentlemen on the other side.

An hon. Member: And you are no economist.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, it has been indicated that this course is not popular because, indeed, there is a cry for wage and price controls which has been fanned I might indicate by statements made by my friends opposite. There has been a fanning of this panic which is developing in the country. It would be very possible for the Liberal government to adopt wage and price controls, but this would be fatal. I suggest it would be fatal because this is a very radical measure; there is no doubt about that. It would hurt the economy and hurt directly the principle the Conservative party has always espoused.

An hon. Member: You worry about your own principles.

Mr. Blais: I have sincere principles, which is much more than I can say for members on the opposite side. Mr. Speaker, I receive letters and phone calls from thinking

[Mr. Blais.]

Conservatives and, thank God, there are still some left in this world. They remind me in my riding that they will no longer support the Conservatives because the Tory party has abandoned its principles. The Tory party has entrenched in the constitution of Canada property and civil rights. It has entrenched in the constitution of Canada the doctrine of laissez-faire, Adam Smith, and the whole kit and kaboodle. These are the principles they have always spoken of and, in the same breath, after they have spoken for generations about free enterprise, they turn around and espouse those policies which are the most radical and the most control-oriented of all policies which might be devised. Those are the people—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member obviously is enjoying himself, but I think perhaps from the standpoint of completing the record of the House through *Hansard* some of the excitement might go down about ten decibels.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I was just suggesting to gentlemen on the other side that they may be laughing now, but they might have some second thoughts. A considerable number of comments have been made lately concerning the fact that according to the public polls, the Conservative Party has reached the lowest point it has reached in many years. They may wonder why they are being criticized by the other parties in this House. I would point out to them that the reason they are criticized is that their views are shallow, devoid of worth and I suggest will bring their downfall.

An hon. Member: Go to the country.

Mr. Blais: On that point, let us go to the country. May I say that is what the gentlemen opposite have been advocating. They ask that practical measures be taken by this government and in the same breath say, "Let us have an election and let this country have no government for 60 days".

● (0020)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blais: First they say, "Let us have a freeze for 90 days." Then in the same breath they say, "Let us have no government for 60 days". That is Tory logic. I suggest they should think more, and review the position they have taken; then perhaps they will survive the next election.

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Peel South): Mr. Speaker, I was very amused by the speech of the hon. member for Nipissing (Mr. Blais). I remind him that it was this party which suggested the indexing of personal income tax. We were laughed at, but it was accepted. And it was this party which suggested limiting corporate tax reductions for one year. It was laughed at, but the suggestion was accepted. It was this party which for a long time advocated tying pensions to the cost of living, and we have just accepted that. I hope the hon. member does not get himself into a fixed position, because pretty soon we will have an incomes policy in this country and he will have to explain to his constituents, whom he has mentioned, why it could not happen today but it will happen tomorrow for pretty darn sure.