

Economic Conditions

● (0900)

Welcome, Allan! I was just reviewing your comments of last evening and wondering where you had been all night while members concerned about the economy of this country have been offering advice to this government.

Mr. MacEachen: I was where your leader was, out of the House. He left after I did. I did not ask for the debate. He did, and he left his crisis to go to bed.

Mr. Keeper: Now that the Minister of Finance is here, I will continue my advice to the government. The former prime minister responded in the same way with regard to questions on interest rates as does the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). As reported in *Hansard* for October 29, 1979, at page 685, we find the then leader of the opposition asked the following question:

At what point will the government look at these alternatives, rather than following the American interest rate up to 13 per cent, 14 per cent and God knows how high?

The then prime minister responded:

—I hope that members of all parties—and, indeed, members of the public—will take advantage of the fact there is now a standing committee inquiry into interest rate policies, to put forward alternative policies they think might be more effective than those which have been proposed by the governor of the Bank of Canada and supported by this government.

Clearly we are dealing with a lack of economic strategy, which is common to both Tories and Liberals. It is a strategy of inaction and insensitivity. It is a group, a coalition, which does not care for people. What we need is for that government over there today and the minister who is now leaving the House to wake up and to take some sane economic action.

Mr. Chuck Cook (North Vancouver-Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, all night long, for something a little over 13 hours now, debate has raged in this House with regard to interest rates, inflation and the flight of capital out of this country.

This is not only a debate about what is best for Canada, it is also a debate about the very existence of Canada. I have never been accused of calling a shovel a spade in my life. My language will be a little strong and some of the points I will make are going to be somewhat horrendous. However, the policies of this government have led us into a bottomless pit into which no light has penetrated. This government's sensitivity is totally lacking.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) made a statement last night which caused me to tremble for my country. I shall paraphrase his statement, but he said the oil and gas of this nation must be for the benefit of all Canadians. I agree with the comment, as I think every member of this House does. Let me repeat his line, and add the other words he should have added: the oil and gas of this country must be for the benefit of all Canadians, but not at the expense of some Canadians. Unfortunately, the inference in some of what he said indicated to me that there may be an attempt for a total federal takeover of the ownership and control of oil and gas in this country. That is why I am scared.

It will not be allowed to happen. It simply cannot be allowed to happen.

Already the policies of this government have led to exploration cutbacks. They have led to drilling rigs leaving the country, and I might add it is a trickle of drilling rigs. However, most of the winter exploration programs were set before the disastrous budget came down and along with it the oil and gas policy. Let hon. members check for the month of April to find out how many drilling rigs are likely to be working in Canada. Border points will be stacked up with jobs, money and capital leaving the western part of the country. There has been a raid, and I will call it a raid, on the natural gas revenues of British Columbia, revenues which have been going to the B.C. government. I never quite understood why this Liberal government is prepared to pay Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Iran or anyone else the world price for oil while robbing Canadians by paying them a very small portion of that price. That is the key factor here. But I must outline what is likely to happen.

There is a large growing separatist movement in western Canada. When the remarks made by the minister of energy last night are carried in western Canada and understood by western Canadians, he will have made several thousand more separatists. I say to hon. members: do not think you will have the same kind of referendum in western Canada as you had in Quebec. This is not so much an emotional issue in Canada as it is an economic rip-off issue. Let me put some examples on the record.

In Quebec, the referendum was partially won because there were liberal canvassers going door to door. If they encountered a mother with young children the statement was made: you know, if you vote yes on the referendum the baby bonus will stop. If the canvassers encountered an old age pensioner, the statement was made: you know, if you vote yes, the old age pension will not be coming the same way any longer.

Mr. Deniger: We never said that, and you know it.

Mr. Cook: In western Canada, separatist canvassers will be saying: "if we separate, the baby bonus will be doubled; if we separate, the old age pensions will be doubled; if we separate, there will be no necessity for an income tax in western Canada. These are believable statements, because all one has to do is look at the difference between \$16.75 a barrel for oil and whatever the world price is at that particular time. The revenue is there.

The constitutional issues are also splitting this country, combined with the economic policies. Nobody wants to be a second-class citizen. The Liberal proposals in terms of an amending formula make every western Canadian a second-class citizen. They make every citizen of Prince Edward Island a non-citizen. Not only that, but the proposal to hold referenda bypasses totally the legitimate provincial governments at the whim of a government which not only sets the question and the time of the referendum but also spends all the money necessary attempting to convince people. It is a direct raid on the power of the provinces.