

Inflation

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary is aware that the programming of the private members' business hour is being studied by the Chair and that the Chair has initiated a debate on the procedure. By the way, such a debate will be held and hopefully we shall arrive at a formula which will be acceptable to all hon. members and which will enable us perhaps to avoid situations such as the one we are in now. Meanwhile, however, if the hon. parliamentary secretary wants to ask, when calling the hon. members' hour, that some orders stand, it is his privilege. If not, the Chair calls the orders and at this time if they are not allowed to stand, and if they have been called for the second time, they will automatically be removed from the top of the list on the order paper. They will go to the bottom of the list or of the orders, as the case may be.

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne that was delivered at the opening of this session, the government established a few things of which we were already aware. I believe all hon. members had been aware of this situation for a long time. Let me quote the paragraph in the Speech from the Throne which deals with unemployment and inflation and which reads as follows:

High rates of unemployment and inflation are clear signals of the inadequacy of economic strategies appropriate to simpler times. They are also signals of the urgent need for important structural adjustments in the economies of Canada . . . More than that, they are the symptoms of an illness which can be cured only by a readjustment of our values, and by a re-discovery of the merits of self-discipline and fair sharing.

Further, they make a few more obvious statements regarding the effects of inflation and unemployment. One can read the following:

The human hardship imposed by the current level of unemployment in Canada is deeply disturbing. It is neither just nor tolerable that in this country there should be so many men and women deprived of the dignity of self-supporting work, unable to meet their financial commitments and plan confidently for the future. It is intolerable that so many are deprived of their right to secure and productive lives, and that their families bear an unfair burden of worry, uncertainty, and deprivation. On a national scale, unemployment now constitutes a very serious obstacle to economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, as result of these statements, the government has also stated through its spokesmen at the ministerial level that we shall have to resort to new methods to face the situation in order to restore a proper balance in our economy and make sure that each and every Canadian can live a proper life in this country as a result of his work. I think of those who are able to work. The serious economic situation which we are facing demands emergency measures and the very purpose of the bill I have the honour to introduce in the House is to tackle in a straightforward manner the real problems of inflation and unemployment. This bill, Mr. Speaker, advocates positive steps instead of idle talk to put an end to this serious problem.

We in the opposition are often accused by the majority that we are very critical but that we never suggest anything concrete. Well, Mr. Speaker, when we do suggest anything they are not taking enough notice of it. I hope that Bill C-205 will show them it is a concrete measure, a positive thing that could be applied in situations similar to the ones we are experiencing now. For a while, it seemed that the Anti-Inflation Board had

taken worthy measures, and during the second semester of 1976 the consumer price index showed an encouraging downturn but the little optimism that it elicited soon disappeared in 1977, the situation has even deteriorated because we do not have the mechanisms required to obtain truly valid results.

• (1712)

The consumer price index went up 1 per cent in October 1976. This index for the month of October 1977 was at 8.8 per cent. We are far from the 6 per cent target set up by the board. In addition, the average salary increase authorized by the board from October 1976 to October 1977 was 7.5 per cent. That leaves Canadians in a very bad situation, specially the majority of workers. There is a 1.3 per cent salary loss which is disastrous for individuals, but mainly for families which can hardly secure the strict minimum. It might look old fashioned to make such a statement when one hears sometime that there is no poverty in Canada. But there is a difference between real poverty and insufficient income to meet one's obligations and that is the situation which confronts the majority of people.

Since 1973, the real increase in personal income, and I insist on the word real, went down 3 per cent. On the other hand, the productivity went up some 3 per cent. A system which allows for such contradictions ought to be corrected immediately. Canadians are making their own effort but get no reward out of it. Indeed they are penalized in many instances. Then we pretend we live in a just society. We tried to establish this just society. I am convinced that when the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was saying across Canada in 1968 that it was his intention and the intention of his party to establish a just society in this country, he was quite sincere. And later, during the next election campaign, when the Prime Minister was saying across the country that it was impossible to establish this just society, I believe he was right again because with our present means, with our obsolete economic system, it is obvious that nobody can succeed in establishing a better society in Canada because we are facing an economic dictatorship. High finance controls the economy of this country and directs our policies to satisfy the craving of those who hold the reins, those dictators of our economy, forgetting that a sound economic system must serve every level of the population and that the efforts of all Canadians must be rewarded so that each Canadian citizen can satisfy his essential needs, wherever he lives. And the government was right when it told us in the Speech from the Throne that we will have to use new methods to redress the present situation, methods which should necessarily give some short term results, but also be planned in order that in the long term we should have adequate mechanisms to make an unbiased and constant analysis of the efforts of the Canadian population, of our productivity and of the purchasing power distributed among the various levels of production as well as an analysis of the difference, of the lack of purchasing power of the same people who find themselves unable to buy the products made by and for Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, the aim of Bill C-205 is precisely to give the government the power to make those adjustments, to find a

[Mr. Pinard.]