

the public service. It must be done because the stakes for the future of this country are so high. I have little patience with those who insist they are in favour of bilingualism in principle, but then proceed to engage in destructive criticism of almost anything beyond token efforts to put this into practice. I think Members of Parliament should welcome the opportunity to engage in debate and to examine the policy in principle and practice on the floor of this House of Commons. Members of this House should welcome the opportunity to affirm the policies which the government has developed. I think hon. members should use such an opportunity to reaffirm their commitment, one expressed in the last parliament, to the Official Languages Act, to its principles and its provisions.

• (1540)

I think such a reaffirmation in this House, and particularly in this House, would go far toward reassuring both those who fear that bilingualism in the public service of Canada is going ahead too fast and those who are concerned that it is not going ahead fast enough. No one has ever claimed that bilingualism would be easy. No one has ever claimed that it would not arouse apprehension or would not add to the cost of government, but Canadians calculate such difficulties small beside the goal of national unity. For me, I believe it is a very small price for being and remaining a Canadian. I think Canadians want to do more than pay lip service to such an ideal. I believe they will approve the effort of the public service, above all places, to show that the ideal in Canada can become a proud reality, increasing the richness of being a Canadian and the dimensions of their mutual understanding.

Having said that, I want to deal with some of the issues in the country which received the proper attention of this House early in its reassembly and this morning in particular. I look at some of the musketeers on the other side. I want to start by saying that in the budget of last May, which the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Hees) referred to in such generous terms, I placed before the House on behalf of the government a number of major proposals for strengthening the economic and social fabric of the country. In terms of the social fabric, there was some immediate relief for those on fixed incomes caught in the escalating cost of living. In terms of the industrial front, those measures were medium and long term and structural in their effect in order to make the Canadian economy more competitive on a medium and long-term basis with our competitors both abroad and within our own market. The hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings knows this well enough. He knows that the prime industrial thrust of that budget was structural and not meant in terms of immediate stimulus. Foremost among my concerns at that time, and those of the government then and now, was and is, to bring about a rapid increase in the number of available jobs so as to substantially reduce the number of Canadians out of work. Unemployment is a serious economic problem. It is too serious to play politics with, I want to suggest to some hon. members. However, it is much more than an economic problem. It is a deeply and gravely serious social problem and a gravely serious human problem, a problem, as I suggested this morning, which cannot be solved merely by theoretical abstraction or by statistics.

*The Address—Hon. J. N. Turner*

I say it is a deeply social problem because for those who really want and need work, and their families, unemployment can be a bitter and deeply frustrating experience which warps and wastes lives perhaps forever. An essential prerequisite for the maintenance of a strong and healthy economy—an economy strong enough to give us rapid growth in job opportunities and thereby reducing unemployment—is the maintenance of reasonable price stability in Canada. It is essential to contain the forces of inflation and protect the competitive position of Canadian producers both in our own domestic markets and in markets abroad. Here my friend from Prince Edward-Hastings and I are at one. But the containing of inflation is also important in reducing the squeeze on the rising prices of family budgets, particularly family budgets of those on fixed incomes, and in preventing the erosion of the hard earned savings of Canadians. That again is a human problem which is affecting every Canadian, particularly on shopping days.

Over the past few years Canada's competitive price position generally has improved in respect of other industrial competitive structures. I submit that is true. Even during the period from November 1971 when the United States adopted the second phase of its price and income control program until mid-1972, the end of the second quarter of this year, the rate of increase in Canadian consumer prices was the same as that of the United States and considerably lower than that of any other industrial country. During the summer months, however, there was a substantial increase in Canadian consumer prices, primarily due, if hon. members will carefully and thoroughly look at the statistics, to the sharp rise in food costs. As members are aware and as Canadians are only too painfully aware, sharply rising food prices have become a world-wide phenomenon, a problem for which no country has found a quick and easy answer. The countries which now apply price and wage controls, Britain and the United States in particular, have had to make exceptions for food products. In any event, the experience of other nations today and the experience of Canada have indicated that price and income restrictions offer no ready-made solutions since this is an area which is perhaps least amenable to controls, particularly in the absence of some form of rationing.

While we in the government have been giving, and will continue to give, intensive consideration to the whole question, I very much hope that the House will approve of the resolution to establish the joint Senate-House of Commons inquiry proposed in the throne speech. I hope that the inquiry will be able to shed some new light and provide useful additional education both for the producers and consumers concerning the nature of the problem and recommend means to resolve it. Also, I hope that parliament will pronounce itself upon that in a fair, equitable and effective way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the budget I brought down in the House last May had two basic objectives and also, to a great extent, was meant to spur the economy in order to stimulate a strong and continuous upsurge in production and employment.