

Cost of Living

tolerated by this government. In fact, it has been encouraged by this government through its co-operation with the fiscal policies of the Bank of Canada.

The least the government could do would be to help these people to allow all or part of the interest to be deducted from taxable income. The government will not do that. The government has no intention of helping the taxpayer in that way because it needs this increased revenue: it has its own vested interest in inflation. The government is guilty of that which it is supposed to be opposing. It is one of the inflationary forces in this country. The people of this country must be conscious of the fact that inflation is something imposed upon them, not only by the big corporations or this or that interest but by a government that is supposed to be looking after the interests of the people.

● (0340)

It is for this reason an increasing number of Canadians are conscious that they need a change in government, that nothing else will do if the major difficulties facing them are to be solved. The Gallup poll has shown that a majority of Canadians favour Progressive Conservative policy on economic stabilization. We have heard from such a riding as Stormont-Dundas that over 80 per cent of the people there favour price and wage controls. In a survey I undertook in Scarborough East, I found that 81 per cent favoured the program for which my party stands. The majority of Canadians, according to the Gallup poll, are not satisfied with the way in which the government is handling the economic situation.

It is clear to the people that they need a new government and that they need a party such as the Progressive Conservative party with a positive and constructive program. It has been clear throughout this debate that the real leadership in economic thinking and policy is coming from the party on this side of the House. Already what purports to be the government party is acting and speaking like an opposition party.

Throughout the debate, which has now persisted for more than eight hours, spokesmen for the government, such as they have been, have not advocated their policies or advanced any proposals; they have acted like an opposition party, attacking the policies we have put forward. So it is clear that economic leadership and constructive social thinking is coming from the Conservative party, and it is equally clear that as soon as the people have an opportunity to make a decision at the polls, government will be entrusted to the party to which I belong.

Mr. Harry Olausen (Coast Chilcotin): Mr. Speaker, I have been sitting here for a couple of hours listening to the speeches made on this subject, and it occurs to me that each and every one of those taking part in the debate has a solution to the dilemma the country is facing. The fact remains that the Canadian people want action. It is action they want. It is action they must get. It is about time we began to implement some of the suggestions which have been made here tonight. We would like to see the government do something about them and see that vigorous measures are taken to cope with the high cost of living.

[Mr. Stackhouse.]

Back in 1970, the president of the Toronto-Dominion Bank said comprehensive wage and price controls had no proven value in reducing or eliminating inflation and would be impossible to impose effectively. Experience in the United States and Great Britain has shown that wage and price controls are no answer to inflation. In spite of this fact, we find the Conservatives still proposing a bankrupt policy.

For years we in this party have been asking for the establishment of a prices review board which would be empowered to investigate questionable price increases and which would call manufacturers before it to justify price boosts, particularly those applying to household necessities. Prior to the last election such an appeal was rebuffed by both Liberal and Tory parties.

The economics of food are most vague and complicated. They start with the people who supply the farmers, and end with the consumer. A calculation of how the system works is an exercise in hocus-pocus because the essential figures are simply not available. There are reams of statistics on the farmer as a collective entity, and even a few on the give and take of the chain stores, but what the middle stretch is between the farmer and the consumer is curiously absent from official records. The fundamental question which must be asked in relation to the economics of food prices is: Who controls food prices, and how?

This is where the review board could enter the picture, if we had a prices review board which would do the job effectively. What amazes me is that under our free enterprise system we should encounter so much talk about comprehensive controls, especially from those who believe so strongly in the free enterprise system. The New Democratic Party has long contended that the country must have a planned economy as well as greater Canadian control over that economy in order to achieve economic stability. We cannot operate wage and price controls under the system which prevails right now. It would not be feasible.

We find ourselves victims of a world wide economic imbalance and our concern is to find the best way of dealing with it. According to many economists, inflation is a permanent part of our economic future. It is for us to deal with it as best we can, and it is for this reason we want the government to take the kind of action which will benefit all those Canadians who are anxiously waiting for firm and constructive measures to be produced.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I regret I must interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has just expired.

Mr. Trevor Morgan (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest all this long evening to what I would call a diatribe. With all respect to what has been said, we are here at a late hour to attempt to deal with inflation within this country. What I have heard so far has not, really, contributed very much to that end, and I include what has been said by two or three members opposite. The paucity of their numbers is an indication of the seriousness with which they regard what is going on in the country. They just don't give a damn, if I may use unparliamentary language. They do not know what we really mean by price and wage controls or the stabilization