

crisis would not pay the legal fees of a good lawyer in the foreclosure action that he faced.

• (1620)

The NDP, that party to the left, lash out at conglomerates, the big chains, the retailers, but they never mention the unions. They take us on a trip that starts at the corner store, continues to Loblaws and finally ends up in Sweden. We always seem to end up in Sweden.

What of this government? The minister says that the government is determined to contain inflation and to protect the dollar. I ask you: when did they develop this concern? I suggest that they started to develop it in the election of 1972. The problem has been with us for four years. They like to say that this is a lesson they learned from the election. I put it to you, Sir, that I would be forgiven if I called it a deathbed repentance. They called it a world-wide problem. They blame it on poor food crops. They compare Canada with countries with which there is no valid comparison and, when all else fails, they blame it on the weather. They never face up to the fact that they could have done something about it, but they did not even try. The best they have been able to do for a country that is waiting for answers has been to wring their hands and to form a committee.

I share the doubts of members of the House on both sides on the question of whether this committee will ever be effective. But as members of this House, we cannot throw up our hands in despair. Our duty is to make that committee work, if it will work, and to make that committee as effective as possible. That is why I supported the motion not to include the members of the other place, as well as the other motions. However, the House has voted on those motions.

There are some hon. members who have advocated the imposition of price and wage controls, and who have suggested that it be done immediately. I hope that the situation in this country can be such that we will never need this kind of control of our economy. But it is a matter which the committee must consider and upon which it must make a recommendation. Speaking for myself and judging from the calls I have had from the people in my constituency as well as the letters that I have received from my constituents and other people, I am satisfied that the mood of the country, if it can be measured on the basis of telephone calls, letters and conversations, is such that the people would now accept at least a temporary freeze on wages and prices. The committee has a duty to consider this remedy, but the government has a duty to the House and to the country in that regard. No one would expect the government to announce a system of wage and price controls unless it is debated in the House first, and after they have determined to impose such a remedy, if they ever do. But everyone expects this government to come clean with the committee and with the country. Everyone expects the government to lay its cards on the table.

The Trudeau government has said that they have contingency plans. They have a duty to this committee, this House and this country to produce plans. The country should know how far the government intends to go if it decides to impose wage and price controls. Would their

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plan include a prices and wages review board? What other machinery would be included in their contingency plan? Indeed, do these plans go beyond the mere control of food prices and do they venture into the field of rent, housing, and other incomes as well as all the other components in the total inflation picture?

The government has said that these contingency plans are in existence. They should not be hidden behind the words "in due course". The government should now take this country into its confidence. More important, they have said that they will impose these contingency plans "when the time comes". They have a duty to tell this committee, to tell the House and the country what criteria they will consider in determining when the time has come. I say this, and I say this with some sorrow, that I am satisfied that the indecisive and unresponsive attitude of this government in all matters, whether in postal disputes, industrial disputes or even on the matter of prices, has encouraged rather than discouraged changes and increases in prices. I am satisfied as well that the government has contributed to an attitude in Canada where large price increases are now considered inevitable by all those engaged in the market, and as a result those who now ask us for remedies find themselves in the midst of a crisis.

The government has a duty to make a full disclosure. If they do not, then the committee may well be a charade, and I hope it never becomes that. If they do make a disclosure, then I put it to you that it is reasonable to expect that the glimmer of optimism which some of us still hold may be justified. I do not think I shall take up any more of the time of the House in this debate. There are other hon. members who wish to speak on the question and instruct the committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, once more the members are forging ahead in a debate on inflation. Indeed, the problem of increasing cost of living and salaries continues to haunt the government and once again we realize that the government does not have ready solutions to solve it.

Faced with this situation, the government suggests as usual that a committee be created to study the trends in food prices across Canada as well as their causes.

Mr. Speaker, by asking the House to form a committee to study the higher food costs, the government recognizes the total failure of the studies made by the famous Young commission on inflation. I remember the bitter debates in this House when the Young commission was created, when the government thought it had found a miracle solution to check inflation. In fact it was decided that a special commission would be assigned the task, by Parliament, of looking into all the elements, domestic and foreign, which contribute to the rise in prices and salaries, and taking the necessary steps to check, inflation. As it happens, the work of that commission gave absolutely no results.

• (1630)

Inflation—to use a favorite expression of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau)—keeps "galloping", prices and