

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but under the terms of the special order passed earlier this afternoon the 20 minute period allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) suggested to this House that our party at least would agree to have one speaker only in respect of each amendment because we feel this is an emergency measure. There has been some indication that the New Democratic Party reject this suggestion. If not, I will be happy to resume my seat and allow the question to be put.

• (1650)

In addressing the House for the first time, I realize my limitations, particularly my inability to express to you the congratulations you deserve on being selected as Speaker. May I simply be content to say that the position you occupy is deserved, the dignity you and your associates bring to the position is a credit to you and to all members of the House, and may I say finally that your patience and your guidance, particularly to those of us who are new members, makes us your debtors.

I am not happy to find myself speaking to the unhappy situation explicit in this motion. I would have much preferred the opportunity of sharing with this House my pride in such things in my constituency as the Stratford Shakespearean festival, but how can I do so with any integrity while my senior citizen constituents are faced with the impossible task of feeding themselves satisfactorily until their January cheques arrive sometime next week, hopefully? Could I be comfortable in telling you of the hopes, aspirations and accomplishments of Perth-Wilmot's townsmen and villagers, while at this very moment the housewives in these communities face the hopeless task of preparing their shopping lists? How can I tell this House of the contributions that have been made by the Perth-Wilmot rural areas, while the mothers of Perth-Wilmot are desperately attempting to plan a balanced diet with one hand and holding in the other their food dollar which is shrinking before their eyes?

I join with the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) in suggesting that we be brief because of this emergency, and I intend to heed his advice. Over the last few days I have listened to those in the Liberal party explain to the House and the country the results of last October 30. I make no comment on these explanations other than to express my surprise that not one of these hon. gentleman has had either the honesty or political wisdom to point out to us the one single factor that has permitted them to retain power. That one factor is luck, pure and simple good fortune. I submit to the House that had legislation dictated that our election be held on a Friday or Saturday, after the families of this nation had somehow once again survived the weekly crisis of purchasing their food supplies, the Liberal Party would be fortunate indeed to require the space occupied in this House by the New Democratic Party to my left. Indeed, if the election had fallen on the first or second day of any month after the families of this nation had met their monthly crisis of paying for shelter, the Liberals

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would find adequate room on the benches now occupied by the Social Credit Party.

One fairly trembles to think of the election results if polling date had been on a Friday or Saturday which coincided with the first or second day of the month, and we could only assume that the chairs of the independent members would provide more than adequate space for my friends opposite. I hope therefore that I might be permitted to congratulate my friends opposite on their good fortune. One cannot help but admire successful gamblers, but I have observed that once an intelligent gambler has succeeded in drawing to an inside straight, he does not pursue that course too often. I am astonished to see that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Gray) now intends to seek a royal flush by saying to Canadian housewives: "fear not, your troubles are over for we will have a committee examine the trends of food prices". Is one to believe that the minister does not know the trends of food prices? I claim to be no expert and therefore I do not pretend to advise him, but may I invite him to repair to the nearest grocery store or supermarket where the real experts, the housewives of Canada, will tell him the trends in terms that will leave no doubt in his mind.

To be charitable, the word "trend" in this motion may be simply poor draftsmanship and the key word may be "factors". In this case, I may be of assistance to the minister by introducing him to the hon. member for Essex-Windsor (Mr. Whelan), now the Minister of Agriculture, who will assure him of one thing, that it is not the Canadian farmer who is profiting from this uncontrolled inflation. Indeed each week the farmer's wife waits with alarm in the grocery line for the inevitable moment when the cashier pushes that fatal total button. She is the most expert of the vast array of talent available to the government because she knows best of all that the prices her husband receives for his farm products do not account for the erosion of the food dollar.

We have heard in recent days that the government, in repentance, intends now to listen to the Canadian citizen. What a day of enlightenment. I, for one, hasten to congratulate those opposite me on this transformation. As evidence of my good faith, and realizing the minister and his colleagues are hard pressed to be everywhere at once, I rush to their aid by way of being a courier of information from my constituents in Perth-Wilmot.

The people of Stratford, and of the towns, villages and rural areas of my riding have several messages for this government. Incidentally, they are disappointed that the message they sent to this government on October 30 was either misplaced, misunderstood or ignored, but they are quite willing to have me report it today, and it is as follows. You have permitted inflation to be uncontrolled and your only answer was to spend \$2 billion on unemployment insurance costs. You have permitted the quality of life for those on fixed income to deteriorate to the point where prices have stripped them of dignity, let alone any ordinary comforts. You have now responded to your political crisis by suggesting yet another special committee, paid for by us, to inquire and make recommendations. This is not a response; you are still turning a deaf ear to our plight.