

Supply

[Translation]

Madam Speaker: The question enumerated by the Parliamentary Secretary have been answered. Shall the remaining questions be allowed to stand?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 62—GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Lewis:

That this House condemns the Government for its failure to live up to the commitments made in the Speech from the Throne on April 14, 1980, and for its conscious disregard for the practices of Parliament and the Constitution of Canada, and urges the government to prorogue the current, unconstitutional Session of Parliament, convene a new Session, and outline its policies before Parliament in a Speech from the Throne.

Mr. David Smith (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, before the House recessed for the luncheon break I was talking about the leadership that this Government has shown in fulfilling its commitments under the Throne Speech. I was, quite frankly, addressing one area where we have not been able to live up to our promise. That has to do with reducing the deficit and I was explaining why.

I was explaining that during tough times more money is needed for social assistance, more money is needed for job creation, and we were trying to make the effort to get industry back on track in the international marketplace. I was putting in perspective the reasons for the six and five program. I want to spend a few minutes talking about that program.

The first move under the six and five program was to limit federal employees—and this was done as an example—to wage increases of 6 per cent and 5 per cent over the next two years. When we brought this program in, it was not a popular move. When it was first introduced we heard howls of indignation from Members opposite.

Then we limited pension and Family Allowance increases to 6 and 5 per cent, although we did take care of the increase in the supplementary pension payments and the child tax credit so that those with the greatest need would not be subject to these constraints.

What we did basically was to call on all Canadians to help those most in need. What happened? We had many hoots and howls of indignation. We went one step further. The Government said that increased funding for new job creating programs would have to come from cutbacks in other Government programs. Therefore, we find increased job creation expenditures in the June, 1982 budget and the October statement which were funded by cutbacks in defence, foreign aid and

energy programs. We heard even more howls from Members opposite when those events occurred.

Now the Opposition appears to have changed its tune to some extent. The Provinces apparently believe in the six and five program because virtually every Province has put in place a similar form of restraint program. The private sector obviously believes in the six and five program because over 200 companies and 40 national associations have expressed support and introduced some form of restraint in their respective industries. It is well known that the public believes in the six and five program, as recent public opinion polls have shown. It goes without saying that now that the Opposition claims it has always believed in the six and five program, its statements have a bit of a hollow ring.

So much for the deficit issue. I would like to close by saying a few words about why this session has gone on for so long. I say this quite apart from the reasons I referred to this morning, namely the bells, the constitutional stalemate and the 70 to 80 speakers at second reading stage of a couple of Bills.

The answer is pretty simple when you consider that the equivalent of 25 days were spent in discussion of the income tax amendments, a debate that stretched from November, 1981 to March, 1983. The answer is pretty simple when you consider that we spent weeks and weeks discussing changes to the National Housing Act, changes that included the mortgage assistance program for home owners in need.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Smith: You can tell I am getting close to the bone, Mr. Speaker, when they start to howl on the other side. The answer is pretty simple when you realize that time and again we had to introduce time allocation motions to limit debate on the Small Business Investments Grants Act, the supplementary borrowing authority and a host of other Bills, yet we frequently hear the question asked about what we are doing for small business.

The answer becomes pretty serious when you consider the consequences. Home owners who were at the point of being evicted had assistance delayed because Members opposite wanted debate, headlines and political points rather than action, getting this legislation into place, legislation that was needed. Preferential loans to small businesses and social and Unemployment Insurance payments were put at risk because those opposite wanted to play politics. Pensioners with life savings were denied interest income because Members opposite were too busy playing games.

The answers for delays, the answers for long sessions are pretty simple and pretty serious. I hope when Members opposite meet someone in the situations I just referred to—distressed home owners, Unemployment Insurance recipients, small-businessmen who needed those programs to be put in place—they are prepared to explain their obstruction and insensitivity.