

*The Address—Mr. Jelinek*

the Gallup poll to which I referred at the opening of my remarks. I believe we will be meeting the wishes of the Canadian people if we take the steps I have suggested to improve the lot of our senior Canadians.

**Mr. Otto Jelinek (High Park-Humber Valley):** Mr. Speaker, may I begin by congratulating you, as the Speaker of this distinguished chamber, upon your appointment. It speaks highly of you, sir, when we consider that after only six short years of being first elected to this House, you have reached this high position, obviously as a result of your sense of duty, integrity and knowledge of legal and parliamentary affairs and also, as you have shown in your first few days as Speaker of this House, because of your total dedication to fair play.

Personally, I am again honoured that the constituents of my riding, High Park-Humber Valley, saw fit to charge me with the responsibility of continuing to represent them in this House. I pledge to them now that I shall continue to work on their behalf, to the best of my ability. As we enter this new session of parliament, I cannot help recalling my thoughts on a similar day two years ago when the previous session of parliament began. Then, Mr. Speaker, as a new member I was impressed with the government's Speech from the Throne. I thought that the words of wisdom which were thrust upon us were great promises, and we were full of expectation. Those promises were soon to become only meaningless words. I cannot help regarding the government's pledges to this parliament in the same light.

It makes one wonder why the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), heading a government which has been in power for 11 years, should suddenly decide that now is the time to start moving forward. That is what he so regally stated in his opening address to parliament. One cannot help wondering what direction his government has been taking in the last 11 years, if only now he intends to begin moving ahead.

**An hon. Member:** The government only moves in circles.

**Mr. Jelinek:** It only moves in circles; I agree wholeheartedly. Let us consider, despite what the Prime Minister considers to be areas of national concern, those areas which failed to receive due consideration from this government which is now in full control of the legislative process. High on the list of priorities is the government's pledge to "wrestle inflation into the ground". Those are the government's own words. The reality, of course, is that not only has inflation not been arrested but it has galloped ahead, straining every sector of our economy and placing undue hardship upon each and every Canadian.

Food costs alone have risen at an unprecedented rate, and many on fixed incomes and the old age pension find it almost impossible to lead a life of self-respect and personal dignity. Is it any wonder that pensioners and, indeed, all Canadians gaze in disbelief at a government which has permitted over 25 million eggs to rot, despite national and world food shortages. Despite this, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) proclaims himself to be more popular than ever. The minister must have been held in low esteem if he now believes his popularity is high.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

Certainly, the issues of inflation, food costs in particular and the state of our economy as a whole must be given highest priority. It is hardly necessary for me to expound on a subject of which apparently every Canadian, with the exception of the Liberal administration, is aware. The President of the United States felt it incumbent upon him, on assuming office, to call a high-level conference almost immediately with industry and labour. All this country received after the Prime Minister obtained a majority was an immediate three-month stalemate of the parliamentary process. Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to quote part of a *Globe and Mail* editorial from the edition of the day before yesterday, which I find most appropriate:

Yesterday—93 days after his third election as leader of the Canadian government—Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau with his colleagues in the House of Commons was busily engaged in the processing of a bill which would provide the moon and sixpence for west coast grain handlers.

Yesterday—61 days after the tragedy of Watergate catapulted him to the presidency—Gerald Ford was before the United States Congress setting out the steps he intends to take to fight inflation which could 'destroy us as surely as any war'.

I find those comments appropriate to our times. Perhaps the Liberal government expected the inflationary situation simply to go away on its own. Perhaps it was embarrassed to face the situation and admit it had no answers and, obviously, no plans. Meaningless generalities and page upon page of non-specifics, as illustrated by the Speech from the Throne—will never be sufficient to deal effectively with the complex areas of concern facing this country today.

● (1250)

Where is there any concrete evidence that the government is ready and willing to "wrestle inflation to the ground"? Where is there any indication that a tough, but just and uniform immigration policy will be established? Where are the proposed changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act, long promised by the government and certainly long overdue in our country? Can we afford to ignore situations such as arose in Toronto during the last postal strike, when approximately 48,000 unemployment insurance cheques were not even picked up and subsequent investigation disqualified some 25,000 of the claims? Is it any wonder that almost every Canadian is demanding a full inquiry into the operation of the Unemployment Insurance Act? In my own constituency, for example, 99 per cent of those replying to a questionnaire favoured such a full investigation. And still there is no action by the government.

During the last wildcat postal strike and the Ministry of Transport firefighters' strike, millions of dollars were lost and thousands of Canadians suffered directly because the government has failed to deal with the illegalities associated with such strikes. The former President of the Treasury Board, the hon. member for Westmount (Mr. Drury), in answer to questions I raised in this House last May stated that a government policy regarding illegal strikes in essential services would be forthcoming and that continuation of such strikes would not be tolerated. Has the government changed its mind in this regard as well, and is such illegal and unlawful action expected to continue unchallenged?