

Income Tax

phenomenon. If we had problems in Canada at that time—two, three, four or five years ago—we were told during the question period and in committee of the whole that the economic situation was not all that serious since everything was under control in Canada, and what we could not control was of course somebody else's fault—Britain, France, the United States, or any other country of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Speaker, I think at that time the government itself was making a mistake in assessment. I think that on November 18 last when the Minister of Finance introduced his ways and means motion, he too was making a mistake in assessment.

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Please forgive me, Mr. Speaker, but I do not know whether the hon. member is rising on a point of order or whether he is speaking in committee of the whole. I wonder whether the Chair has decided to accept the sub-amendment.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): I thank the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) for the point he has raised. The sub-amendment is now in the hands of the Chair for consideration. The Chair is having some difficulty as to whether in fact we have another proposition. That being so, there is a question as to whether there can be a sub-amendment if a new proposition is introduced, or whether in fact an entirely different amendment would have to be moved. That point is now being considered, and the Chair will make a decision very shortly.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Thank you.

● (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, from out point of view, an error was made in assessing the economic situation.

A few years ago, it sounded good in speeches, it was easy to say that one did not have the answer; it was good enough to adopt a superficial attitude towards the economy and say: "It is an international phenomenon; it is the international spiral of inflation; no one can escape it and let us thank the Lord it is not more serious in Canada".

Mr. Speaker, there is now talk of a recession, but even now, the views are not very enlightened. No one will commit himself by admitting it, but everyone can see in what economic situation we are now living. What has the solid, liberal majority government proposed since the last election, to check that inflation? As we all know, it has introduced bills which I would call of secondary importance, although they are not bad bills, but bills that only plug holes and given no real leadership to our economy.

Mr. Speaker, the first bill of significance in this Parliament is in my view the one now before us, Bill C-49 or the Income Tax Act. Now this bill, although extensive, and dealing with fiscal matters and the people's income problems, has put limited effects, since it does very little for those who are most in need of help, the underprivileged in our society.

[Mr. Fortin.]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw what some members may think is a dark picture to explain what is felt at home, in Montreal, in Quebec City, in the province of Quebec and in the country generally. First, all Canadians are hurt by the depreciation of the dollar. The same work hour does not produce the same amount, and even assuming the nominal revenue per hour remains the same, the worker gets less because his dollar is depreciating. What is done about this? Absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing is done to try and prevent our dollar from depreciating, let alone increasing its value. Nothing is done. This means first that the Canadian worker has less and less purchasing power, because of the increasing cost of food and the essentials of life. We have there a first gap, about which we did nothing but establish the Food Prices Review Board, the so-called Plumtre Commission. The same worker already penalized by insufficient income relative to consumer prices is penalized by the depreciation of his dollar. This in turn entails depreciation of his work, and decreasing work stimulus.

At the same time, industries at home, truly French-Canadian, launched and maintained with Canadian money, are facing foreign competition through either imports or certain forms of dumping from the United States, especially in the furniture industry. Mr. Speaker, the core of the furniture industry in Canada is in our areas, in Daveluyville, Princeville, Arthabaska and Warwick.

This is an industry of our own which provides a few hundred or thousand workers and labourers with employment. The salaries paid are not higher than necessary. These workers, Mr. Speaker, are already having difficulty balancing their budgets, because of the spiralling increase in the cost of living. Like all other workers, they have been victimized by the devaluation of the Canadian dollar. The purchasing power they get now for one hour of work is therefore smaller than it was six months, one year or two years ago. That is why these workers are rightfully fighting for the escalation of their wages in line with the cost of living increase. This, Mr. Speaker, is a situation we are living on a day-to-day basis.

While workers on the one hand are less motivated to work, are getting now for one hour of work less than six months ago, and can hardly support themselves and their families, company owners are faced with unrestrained foreign competition, especially from the United States.

Mr. Speaker, it is a form of dumping. If we look at what happened in Toronto, during the Canadian National Exhibition, the minister will appreciate, if he is serious and if he wants to inquire and verify what I have said, that most manufacturers who exhibited in Toronto have experienced a decline in their sales. Why? It is not because the furniture lacked quality or because the workers have not worked enough, but it is primarily because we suffer that competition which is now beyond our control.

The textile business is another industry which is part of the backbone of our economy in Quebec and which employs thousands of workers. According to an answer from the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gillespie), an inquiry on polyester and imports from Korea is in progress. The employees work in generally unsanitary and hard conditions. The work is done on a