

Supply

Mr. Lewis: There have been times in my political history when I felt that at least in the case of the Tories I knew where they stood. When the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) led the Conservative party, I knew where they stood. I'm darned if I know where the Conservative party stands now on any issue which faces this country, whether it is capital punishment or taxes or pensions or national unity or any other question—even bilingualism. One member speaks one way; another member speaks another way. And I, as leader of the New Democratic Party, am supposed to say to the Leader of the Opposition: "Bob, you are the guy to lead this country to Heaven." I am supposed to say: "Go on, Bob; take over and lead us into the Kingdom of Heaven on this earth."

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: The Leader of the Opposition talks about the awful situation with respect to unemployment. Let me just remind him of this: if you look for a year in which the seasonally adjusted rate of unemployment was higher than it is even now, that year was in 1961 when the Conservatives were in power.

The Leader of the Opposition rises when there is an international monetary crisis to ask with fervour that the government do something about it. He forgets that it was during the last Conservative administration that the whole relationship between the government and the Bank of Canada went down the drain.

The Leader of the Opposition made a remark about organ grinders.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: That got to you.

Mr. Lewis: If hon. members would be quiet, I want to tell them two things about that. First, I want to thank him for the compliment. At least, someone else was the monkey. The second thing I want to say, after listening to his speech, is that he could do with an organ grinder a lot more than with a speech writer. I did my best to phrase that delicately so that I would not have to suggest that anyone was a monkey. But I would suggest that an organ grinder might be in place. Because I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that what we have been listening to in this House, during the debate on the Speech from the Throne, during the debate on supplementary estimates and during the debate today is a call for office as hungry, as clear, as unprincipled and as devoid of objectivity as anyone in this chamber has ever heard. I want the people of Canada to know this. If the time comes, and this government falls—and it may do so a week from now, or two weeks from now—

An hon. Member: Tell us when!

Mr. Lewis: —or three weeks, or three months, because we have made clear what kind of legislation we shall support—and if it should come about that the Leader of the Opposition does take over as head of the government, he will do so not because of his insatiable hunger for office, he will do so because of the failure of the Liberal

[Mr. Lewis.]

government to produce legislation which in our view the people of Canada require for their welfare.

The Leader of the Opposition says he does not intend to oppose this bill. And then he makes a budget speech, or a mini-budget speech. Forgive me, there was no mini-budget. However, he made a budget mini-speech this afternoon dealing with taxes and unemployment. Of course, the government is responsible for the level of unemployment, not only since last May but since its disastrous decision back in 1969 to set off employment against the rising cost of living. That was a stupid course to take and not only the Leader of the Opposition but every spokesman for my party, myself included, and every knowledgeable economist in the country warned the government that it was being misled by its advisers in the Department of Finance and in the Bank of Canada. But the government had an overwhelming majority, smaller, it is true than that of the Conservative party led by the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert, but just as effective, and it chose to ignore everything which was said on this side of the House.

I want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that October 30, producing, as it did, a minority government, led to a situation in which the Liberal administration opposite acts entirely differently from the way it acted when it could call upon its arrogant majority. It is now bound to take into account the wishes of the opposition and the advice of knowledgeable people who disagree with its policies. The Leader of the Opposition, in the next election campaign, will no doubt travel across the country yelling for a stable majority government under his gentle wing. Well, the people of Canada have learned that an arrogant majority government is to their detriment, and he will not be able to persuade the Canadian people of anything else, despite his hunger for office.

We are, of course, paying a heavy price in unemployment. What are the suggestions put forward by the Leader of the Opposition? One of them—and I agree with it—was that there should be a sizeable income tax cut. I had my ears open to hear exactly what figure he had in mind. If I am wrong, the Leader of the Opposition, for whom, personally, if I may interject this, I have the greatest possible warmth and respect—

An hon. Member: Too late.

Mr. Lewis: —will correct me. This will not prevent me in the future, any more than it has prevented me in the past, from telling him what I think of his policies and attitudes. But I do have a deep respect for him. I am waiting to hear what he has to say. How big shall the income tax cut be? My recollection is that during the election campaign he proposed, in addition to the continuation of the 3 per cent reduction, a further 4 per cent decrease for 1972 beginning on July 1 of that year. All I have ever heard him say, or, I state more accurately, all I have ever read him as saying about the size of the personal income tax cut was that it should be 4 per cent for the second half year of 1972. That is all I remember him saying. If I am wrong he will correct me, but he is not correcting me. That meant an average cut of 2 per cent. If the Minister of Finance is stupid and crazy enough to present that kind of personal income tax reduction, then he will not be Minister of Finance for very long, I promise him that.