

● (1900)

There are many things this government can do. I think we have been relevant in this debate. I think the credibility and the responsibility for the credibility of that relevancy lies now with the government. It is up to the government to take some positive steps and to do these things which have been suggested which may ease the burden on the people in this country. Above all, from the very narrow point I have been addressing this evening, the government should at least return some credibility to its process and structure and once again accept responsibility for decisions which directly affect people and the regions.

**Hon. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the House will be glad to know that I have been able to persuade a few of my colleagues and myself not to extend the debate any further. I rise simply to express the hope that was included in the closing words of the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall), namely, that the government will realize how serious the situation in this country is when we have debated it for these 23 hours. We earnestly hope that the concerns which have been expressed by many members last evening, all night long and today, will be given the consideration they deserve by the government during the next two or three weeks.

We look forward with hope to some positive measures being brought before the House when we come back in January.

**Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, I share those sentiments. I think history will note that this has been the longest debate under Standing Order 26. Subject to verification, I believe that is so, but in any event, I am glad to see at the closing of the debate that the government House leader is here, and I hope he will convey to his colleagues in cabinet the concerns which have been expressed in this House about the economic crisis in the country.

[Translation]

**Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, after listening to my colleagues and having heard most of the speeches made in the last two days, I believe that I can easily conclude that the lengthiest debates are not necessarily the most fruitful. Moreover, I believe that the many speeches made last night and today prove without a doubt that several members would have every advantage in rereading carefully our budget and energy policy since a better understanding of these policies would certainly have led them not to make the types of speeches that we have heard.

In any event, I have no objection to the procedure itself as this debate is absolutely legitimate and in order. The opposition exercised its fancy, or rather its privilege or its right, and the fact that this debate lasted for as many hours as it did should not be criticized. As government House leader, I have had to reply to several questions from my colleagues here and outside the House, and I now repeat publicly what I have told others, and that is that the opposition members should not be

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blamed as the procedure was quite normal and legitimate. I do not want to make any judgment on the ruling of the Speaker to allow this special debate. However, as I said earlier, with all due respect for my colleagues, I must say that several members would have had advantage in reading more carefully our budget and energy policies and in giving these policies more time to become effective. We could then have avoided a debate which has been much too lengthy in my opinion and which history will show to have been nearly useless.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I simply want to offer my best wishes to all the employees of the House of Commons who have had to work very long hours because of this debate and wish a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all my colleagues on both sides of the House.

[English]

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** I make no comment on any other remark by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) except that I would like to join him in the statement he made with respect to the staff of the House of Commons. As the House knows, there was a resolution earlier, but that was some time ago and the debate has since extended beyond that time. I think the sentiments of that earlier motion should be renewed now as this debate closes. In that sense I would like to join with the President of the Privy Council in expressing our thanks to the House and to the staff of the House of Commons. Some of them have laboured very long and very hard, and all of us should be grateful. I suggest respectfully that this is perhaps the best served legislative assembly in the world.

**Mr. Knowles:** Now that we seem to be on a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I should like to join in associating the members of this party with the members of the other parties in wishing the very best for Christmas and the New Year to the staff of the House, to all those who occupy the Chair, to all those at the Table, and also our best wishes to all members of the House and their families.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis):** Mr. Speaker, I hope that all the backbenchers, even those who sit in the first row, will be allowed to offer to the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), who is now in the House, to the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) and to the hon. member of the Privy Council, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), the best wishes of all the members of this House and thank them for having maintained a good spirit in the House during this debate which has perhaps been rather long, maybe too much so for some—for my part, I do not wish to make any comment about the length of the debate—but, in any case, we, the ordinary members of this House, would like to offer our best wishes to all the senior members who spoke long before I did.