

It is no wonder that the people of the nation are confused. It is no wonder that the primary producers in agriculture are becoming sceptical about the nice, pleasing speeches being made by the Minister of Agriculture. They are businessmen. They would greatly prefer progressive action from the minister on measures to solve their problems rather than pleasant speeches designed to win friends and influence farmers.

When we in this party talk about controls we are not talking about freezing Canadians into a position in which they cannot move. We are not talking about introducing hardship for any group of Canadians. We are trying to bring in some sort of program designed to help this country out of the dilemma in which it finds itself. It is not good enough for any government, let alone a Canadian federal government, to say that because things are going on in other countries, it naturally follows that they must go on in Canada. Somebody has to be a leader. Somebody has to find a solution to these inflation trends. Why can't it be the Parliament of Canada?

The only thing holding the Parliament of Canada back from making progress in fighting inflation and the increasing cost of living is the stubbornness of the government in refusing to accept, even in part, a proposition which the opposition sincerely feels will work. Government members castigate us about a 90-day freeze. They talk about it as if that is the total program. They castigate us for not laying the program out in full.

On a subject as complex as this no man in the world has the capability to discuss the question completely and to illustrate the remedy within a 20-minute speech. I congratulate the hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies), because in a series of speeches he has done more to illustrate a policy that will work than all the ministers of finance I have had the pleasure of hearing during the last two parliaments. The hon. member for Don Valley made a simple statement that will find acceptance—

Mr. Caccia: Very simple.

Mr. Danforth:—even from the hon. member who interjected. The hon. member for Don Valley said the present economic policies are just not working. If you think they are, just go and ask your constituents. If you do not know what is going on, you had better find out or you will not be here very long. The hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) insists on injecting himself into the debate. It is to him I allude. If he does not know right now that the increased cost of living is a massive problem in his riding, a riding with which I am familiar, then he is not accepting his responsibilities as a member of this House.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, no one in this House can be accused of not being concerned about the problems facing Canadians. No one in this House can be accused of being unsympathetic to the fact that the cost of living is going up at an alarming rate. The only difference between members of the House is on the way the problem should be attacked. If I have any plea to make to this parliament it is to ask members of the other political parties to lay down their partisan, political shields and, as responsible Members of Parliament, show some interest in the principle that we are proposing at this time.

Mr. Caccia: May I ask the hon. member a question?

Increased Cost of Living

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): This can only be done with the consent of the hon. member who has the floor.

Mr. Danforth: I will be glad to receive a question.

Mr. Caccia: In light of the non-partisan plea which the hon. member just made, would he enlighten the House on the remedies he would like to propose?

● (1740)

Mr. Danforth: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had been in the House during the course of debates on the economic policies of his government which have taken place in this session alone, he would not have to ask such a stupid question.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, the terms of the resolution before us are very broad, covering the entire spectrum of the cost of living. I am as aware and as concerned as anyone about the elements that go to make up the cost of living, food, rent, clothing, utilities, transportation and the rest. But on the principle that the longest journey begins with a single step, I will confine my remarks today to cover what can be done about the spiralling price of food which some analysts tell us may increase by as much as 45 per cent. I am well aware that this will not frighten the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) nor some other ministers perhaps, but it frightens the people of this country and it frightens me. I am afraid to think about the situation that can occur if nothing is done about food prices in an effective way.

At the outset of my remarks I want to warn the government that it cannot get away with the type of food prices review board which has been proposed. Certainly the skirts of the New Democratic Party may be broad and protective in some regards, but I warn the government that it is not going to be able to hide behind them. We have said that the board as announced by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Gray) is not adequate and will not pass as far as we are concerned.

I come from a west coast province, and to us the situation in which we are placed today appears as though there has been a big shipwreck and people are tossing about in the water. The government has proposed a search and rescue operation but has confined its terms strictly to the business of search. While people are in the water, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) is telling them that the situation is inevitable and nothing can be done about it because of world conditions of one sort or another, and the Minister of Agriculture is reiterating tiresomely from the shore that food is a very great bargain—if you can get it! In the meantime, the Conservatives are watching the heads bobbing about in the water and are advising the stranded people to freeze for 90 days, but saying nothing about what they propose to do during the 90-day period.

Watching the Progressive Conservative party, I rather wonder if their reticence about bringing forward their 90-day program is because they have no ideas for it. I am afraid all they would do is put on a 90-day freeze and then, like Mr. Nixon, take it off and watch prices skyrocket. I am afraid they have not taken the warning of the late Jan Masaryk, the Czech patriot, who declared: "Excitement is