

The Canadian Economy

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) has only one minute left.

Mr. Mackasey: I would apologize to the hon. gentleman—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) seeks the floor on a point of order.

Mr. Yewchuk: Would the minister permit a question?

Mr. Mackasey: First I wish to correct the record, if I am wrong. If the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Williams) was here from eight to 10.30, I did not notice him because he did not say anything, either standing or sitting, in those 2½ hours.

To sum up, I have listened to the opposition, including the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), with my usual attentiveness. I do not believe that leaders of political parties should be heckled unduly. I think they should have a chance to make their point. They are usually non-partisan and serious in their approach. I think we can best summarize the contribution of the hon. gentleman by saying that his only criticism was that what we have done is right but that we did it too late, which is a matter of judgment. I trust the judgment of the Minister of Finance.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I believe the hon. member for Athabasca wishes to ask a question, but I should point out that the minister's time has expired, so the question could be asked and the answer given only with the unanimous consent of the House.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

• (11:50 p.m.)

Mr. Yewchuk: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) put the blame for unemployment and inflation on many things. Would he consider putting the blame where it really lies, and that is on the shoulders of this incompetent government?

Mr. Mackasey: The answer to that, Mr. Speaker, is the hon. member's asinine intervention only justifies my description of him earlier at the beginning of my speech.

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity of hearing the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) on former occasions. He has the reputation of being quite an adept debater. I think he has given some indication of that ability this evening, but I would just like to check him, notwithstanding the fact that he may think we are unwarranted in the abuse we heap on the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson). We shall continue to do so so long as his fiscal and monetary policies mean that the vast majority of the Canadian people will have to suffer and be deprived of the bare necessities of life.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mahoney: Vast majority?

Mr. Alexander: You know the criticism does not stem just from this party. The criticism certainly comes from business leaders and from economists. The criticism comes from the persons who are out of work, and from those who fear that they may be out of work. The criticism comes from the mother who is looking for food for her child. So, in all fairness, I think the Minister of Labour should have gone beyond the members of this House. He should have gone into the streets where, if he is not aware of it now—

Mr. Gundlock: He will be there soon.

Mr. Alexander:—he would learn that people are certainly concerned.

To say that these times are trying and disturbing, and that we are in a time of crisis, is certainly an understatement. I am distraught, I am dismayed and disgusted, not because of the programs the government has brought in this evening, since it had no other alternative, but I am dismayed, distraught and disgusted with the complete snow job that has been perpetrated on the Canadian people in the past five or six months as a result of statements that came from the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). I should like to say, as we reflect on some of those statements, that I can only properly conclude this government is a sham, a farce and a fraud.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: The statements of the Prime Minister alone would lead one to believe he was trying to bring in confidence when there was no reason to have confidence. Mr. Speaker, this is a classic example. One day in January during the question period the Minister of Finance said:

I would feel very unhappy with my position as Minister of Finance if there was not an upturn in the economy in 1971 and if unemployment did not trend downward on a seasonally adjusted basis.

This is the sort of theme that has been running through the speeches of the Minister of Finance month after month. I think it is shameful the way he has approached this particular problem. It does not matter how you cut the cake. It does not matter what type of rhetoric comes from the other side, or what statistics come out, the only statistic that means something is the one which appears in every paper in the nation in big half inch print, if not more: "7.1 per cent of the work force is out of work."

Mr. Mahoney: Tell us what you would do.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Mahoney) will not interject this time. You know what I think of your speeches. I called your intervention asinine. I do not know whether the Minister of Labour—this is through you, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It seems to me that we are not helping this debate, or ourselves or the House, by interruptions. I think that hon. members who have the floor should be given an opportunity to make their speeches.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!