

● (2002)

**AFTER RECESS**

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY****ALLOTTED DAY S.O. 58(11)—ALLEGED MISMANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY**

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Allard:

That this House deplores (a) that the government has shown a lack of foresight and leadership in respect of the flooding of the Canadian market with foreign goods, particularly in the areas of footwear, textiles, clothing and furniture, which has contributed a great deal in weakening Canadian industries and resulted in a number of layoffs;

(b) that the votes allocated by the government to the Canada Works programs are not sufficient to create enough jobs to overcome the massive and persistent unemployment which is especially severe among the 18 to 30 age group seeking permanent employment, regardless of the fact that a relatively large number of projects have been approved;

(c) that no serious action has been taken to reduce interest rates which are the major cause of unjustified price increases and to fight effectively against inflation; and

(d) that in spite of the fact that the present administration has very candidly acknowledged that the economic methods now in use are no longer suitable, the government, because of its weakness in the face of economic and financial dictatorship, persists in applying the same obsolete economic methods which leave the Canadian population to contend with the same economic problems.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Order, please. At six o'clock the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs had the floor.

**Mr. Alan Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, when I was approached just prior to the supper hour with the suggestion that I might join in this debate today on this opposition motion I thought to myself, not another debate on a subject relating to the economy! It seems to me that we in this parliament have been spending an inordinate amount of time, on opposition days and in the middle of a very prolonged debate on the income tax measures sponsored by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) which are currently before the House, in playing the game of navel gazing. One of the problems of being a parliamentarian is that, all too often, we get lost in the trees of our existence here in the House of Commons and do not stand back enough and take a good look at what is going on in the country, at the positive things which are happening.

The hon. member for Rimouski (Mr. Allard) is a member for whom I have a very high regard. I know he has been a very successful entrepreneur in years gone by and that he has always maintained a very positive outlook in terms of his business abilities. But having looked at the motion he has put forward, I thought it would be in order to review just where we

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stand today and what the leaders of this country are saying about our economy. Therefore, over the supper hour, I took a little time to dig through some current files, the latest news reports and so on.

It must be rather disappointing for the opposition, particularly for the official opposition, to find that the news today is becoming increasingly brighter. Because if there is one thing, Mr. Speaker, that they do not want, it is for the news to be brighter. They flourish on bad news. Wherever they go they seem to dwell on bad news. If they are not climbing on to the backs of the RCMP, they are talking about the bad state of the economy. Because respected public figures such as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) and the leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) continue to take this sort of approach, eventually people begin to believe that there are a great number of problems in existence. People start to look at these problems as though they were spelt in capital letters and the positive aspects were spelt in small letters.

I suppose to some extent the media also become involved in this game. Good news is never really news as such. What is of interest and what perhaps sells newspapers is the kind of news that is negative news. Bad news is more exciting than good news.

I should like to put on the record a few of the positive things that are happening in Canada today. I do not need to go very much further back than yesterday when none other than the Governor of the Bank of Canada, speaking to the Canadian Club in Toronto, said that in his view the pessimistic expressions we continue to hear from the media are simply out of date. This ties in with what people are thinking and saying.

I have talked to a number of ordinary workers and business people in the last few weeks in my riding and have found that the mood is very much one of optimism, that a positive outlook is being taken. It seems to me the fact that the Governor of the Bank of Canada, in an important speech, emphasized the positive aspects of our economy and the prospects for the coming year or so, is something we should not ignore. The opposition will ignore it, of course, because it is not in the opposition's interest to talk about good news. Politically speaking, I suppose the only two occasions in this century when they have managed to convince Canadians they should give them more seats in the House of Commons than the Liberal party, were, first, in the midst of the depression. I suppose the bad economic news of the time encouraged Canadians to look for an alternative to the government in power in 1930. It did not last very long—some five years. Unless we on this side talk about the good news it will not be talked about because it is not in the interest of the opposition parties to promote it.

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The Governor of the Bank of Canada has indicated that, in his view, the Canadian economy is adjusting. He is saying, even from the conservative position he occupies, that inflation could move to a level below that which prevails in the United States, with the proviso, in his words, that Canadians must act sensibly. There is a message here which all segments of our