

*Summer Recess*

The hon. member also suggested that third parties enjoy the same privileges in this House as does the official opposition. I submit this is totally untrue. Time allocations for debates in this House afford much ampler scope to the official opposition, with their greater number of members, than to third parties. On this also I therefore feel the minister twisted the facts when he indicated that third parties enjoyed the same privileges as opposition parties to make their views known. My feeling is that this proportion is "maintained", if not overly "maintained".

The minister also complained that government back-benchers do ask too few questions during question periods, before orders of the day. What he meant in my view was that government members did not participate as much as the opposition parties in that period, considering we are now on television. And my answer to the minister is this: when an opposition member asks a question, he or she gets an answer forthwith or at least the minister tries to answer, and therefore suggest that the ratio is very well maintained because as many government members appear on the screen as opposition members. I note that before TV came into this House, no government members ever rose to ask questions. So, Mr. Speaker, my feeling is the Minister of State for Urban Affairs in his remarks showed much more anger at what happened earlier today than a positive attitude toward improving the debates in this House.

Mr. Speaker, like other hon. members, I have had the opportunity of working under our able Speaker of the House of Commons within a committee which set up the organization for broadcasting and telecasting our debates in the House. This is a new experience which we lived through during this past session, and after having observed the public at least in the area I am representing, and the persons I chanced to meet, I clearly have the impression that this undertaking is well taken by public. It creates a closer relationship between the Parliament of Canada and the public it represents. It also enables the Canadian public to better understand what goes on in its national parliament.

However, that does not mean that any improvement in the administration is necessarily visible. The performance of the government during the past session is not so much laudable, and I think that the concerns expressed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre that there were possibilities of an election in the fall are unjustified because at that time the government would have to go before the people empty-handed. Personally, I rather think that they will try to restore their fortunes during the coming winter months in order to be able to go before the people of Canada with a better image of their administration.

What we have particularly deplored in the last few months is the devaluation of the dollar. In my opinion, this is detrimental for business in Canada, for industry, trade, employment and the cost of living. The whole Canadian economic

system has suffered from the devaluation of the Canadian dollar. And when I look at the present situation in Canada, that is the devaluation of the dollar, an employment level lower than we have seen in a long time, unemployment around 9 or 10 per cent, and even higher in certain areas of the country, a rate of inflation that the government has not succeeded in controlling in spite of all its efforts, when I see these things, Mr. Speaker, this reminds me of the situation which existed in 1960 and 1961 when another administration governed Canada and was defeated because of this. I am talking about the Progressive Conservative government of 1958 to 1962. The same situation existed in 1962 at the time of the general election. The dollar had been devaluated. There was very high unemployment and uncontrollable inflation. We now have the same situation, and perhaps even worse this year, after about 15 years of a Liberal administration.

The government talks about taking all sorts of initiatives to fight against inflation while it takes action which increases the cost of living. It has also taken action to increase every six months, for instance, the cost of oil, gasoline and heating oil in Canada. This increases significantly production and transportation costs and has disastrous effects right down to the level of the distribution of goods and services, and the Canadian consumer must pay for it. The oil price increase serves only to fill the pockets of the multinational companies.

Mr. Speaker, when the government claims it is taking steps to fight inflation, I feel it takes them to increase the cost of living. There is also widespread discontent in the field of agriculture. Dairy producers, be it industrial or raw milk, are clearly dissatisfied with the policy of our government. Nothing has been done to improve and stabilize the Canadian dairy industry. That is sadly lacking and the government should bring forward a long-term policy to stabilize production and especially farm incomes.

In the beef industry, we have erratic fluctuations between highs and lows. Farmers always have a hard time to follow those fluctuations when beef goes through crises such as those we have witnessed in the last two or three years. Instead of suffering terrible losses, farmers get rid of their herds. The herds having been decimated, we see the higher prices we are now experiencing. Now, Mr. Speaker, I feel that once again the government has failed to give leadership by not introducing a policy to stabilize production in those sectors.

Another area on which I want to dwell before concluding my comments—and on this I entirely agree with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles)—is that of senior citizens. We have been working and fighting for a long time to obtain from the government more satisfactory pensions for older persons and I refuse to admit more particularly what happens in the case of persons from 60 to 65 years of age, for example, whether they are widows or unmarried persons, but especially widows. Again recently there was in my riding a couple of senior citizens, the wife being under 65 when