

*Increased Cost of Living*

responsible for housing and said, "Bring in your housing bill." I told him we have two or three amendments to it. I said that the bill is only a band-aid bill, but let us at least get the band-aid on the move. I gave him the undertaking that our party wants to see the Liberals on the move. We want to get the bill to the committee, where we will move our amendments, hope to get some support from government members, move the bill back into the House and get some action. It will not solve much, but it is better than nothing. The Prime Minister tries to say that there have been delays. I cannot say he deliberately misrepresents the facts, but I can say he wanders from the truth.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired.

**Mr. Ross Whicher (Bruce):** Mr. Speaker, generally it is with a great deal of relish that I speak in the House of Commons. However, tonight I do not have that sense of enjoyment because, quite frankly, this is one of the few occasions in my parliamentary career, when to some extent at least, I have to agree with what has been said by the members of the opposition. The most serious problems we have in Canada today is that of inflation. It is a problem which has been with us for a number of years. One would be less than truthful if he did not admit that.

This is not merely a Canadian problem; it is worldwide. I agree with the hon. member who this afternoon said that just because it is also a problem in the United States, in England, in France and in Germany does not mean that if the people in those countries happen to close their eyes, we in Canada, whether members of the Liberal party, the Conservative party or the New Democratic Party, should close our eyes to the problem. We cannot do that because the citizens of Canada are suffering grievously from this great sickness of inflation and it is up to us to do something about it.

Many arguments have been put forward as to why we do not have a system of controls in Canada.

**An hon. Member:** We have inept leadership, that is why.

**Mr. Whicher:** We have somebody with a loud voice on the other side. Please do not interrupt me when I am on your side at the moment. We have been told that there are many arguments against it. The first argument is that it will not work. Mr. Speaker, I am not prepared to accept the lame excuse that controls will not work, because they simply have not been tried in Canada in peacetime.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Whicher:** It is true that they have been tried in other parts of the world; no one would deny that. However, it is not true that they have been tried in our chosen country, for which we are responsible. For that reason I say that until they have been tried and proven unsuccessful, I will not accept the excuse that they will not work. I have also been told that controls are unconstitutional and we must obtain the permission of the provinces and get agriculture, labour, industry and everybody else on our side.

[Mr. Woolliams.]

It is high time we had a little chat with the provinces, with agriculture, industry, labour and all the other segments of the economy. If we do not—and this is the question I want to ask members of the House of Commons tonight—what is the alternative? People on my side of the House say that the members of the opposition have not told us exactly what they would do. But I have not heard from my side of the House either, since this Parliament started or during the past number of years, the alternative to controls in Canada. The alternative must be in our lifetime. I say, with sadness, that the alternative is absolute financial chaos in our lifetime if something is not done to stop the runaway inflation we have in Canada.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Whicher:** Surely, Mr. Speaker, it is not necessary for one to have been to school or to university to understand this fact. A person earning \$10,000 a year now in Canada, ten years from now—with the rate of inflation we have on May 10, 1973—will have an income of \$20,000 a year; twenty years from now he will have an income of \$40,000. One of my friends on this side of the House, whom I respect, said, "How can you bring in controls when the doctors, certainly, will not care about it?" He said that doctors today are earning \$50,000 a year, while hospital workers are earning only \$4,000 a year. To that hon. member I say that everyone knows that ten years from today a doctor who now has an income of \$50,000 will have an income of \$100,000 a year, and the hospital worker will be earning \$8,000 a year—if we do not do something about inflation. I think it is high time we did something about this problem.

• (2050)

I think the only people who will agree with me are hon. friends to my immediate right. They say we cannot control things in this country. Only a month ago we put controls on a great Canadian corporation, Bell Telephone. Complaints came from my party, of course, from the NDP in particular and there were at least groans and sighs of dismay from my Conservative friends when the Canadian Transport Commission brought in a recommendation that Bell Telephone be granted a 2.3 per cent increase. The government said that this was too much and that it would have to review the situation. We heard the moans and the groans of the leader of the New Democratic Party about Bell Telephone gouging the public with a 2.3 per cent increase, but only a week or ten days later Ontario Hydro workers were granted a 30 per cent increase over a three-year period, or 10 per cent a year—and the leader of the New Democratic Party did not even give one good grunt.

You cannot have it both ways. Somewhere along the line we will have to face this situation. I am not going to say that Bell Telephone is making too much money, but just compare its increase of 13.5 per cent over the last five years with the 63 per cent increase by the Post Office, which is a nationalized concern, the 50 per cent increase by Ontario Hydro, which is a public concern, and the 39 per cent increase by Quebec Hydro and you will see that public enterprise has not really done too badly.

I only raise this matter to show that we have controls in Canada when we want to bring them into effect, but when