

Anti-Inflation Act

The methods the government is using are not the methods we would have used. The overcomplicated, overstructured mechanism, with the grotesque assertion of powers which the government has brought forward without safeguards and provision for parliamentary supervision, do not satisfy us; nor will they do the job. Clearly, the bill will need substantial alteration and improvement. These improvements cannot be made at the present stage. In my view, the bill ought to go to committee within a reasonable time in order that these improvements can be inserted. Then we in parliament, and the people of the country, can get on with the job.

If the government is not prepared to bring this measure into line with what is reasonable, and to accept amendments which my party will indicate ought to be part of the bill, then I say that we reserve our right to vote against the bill when it comes back at the final stage.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear the last statement of the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), to the effect that his party reserves its right to vote against the bill. I think they may finally be on the right track with regard to price and income controls. When the white paper was first tabled in the House, a number of members of parliament were saying that a lot of questions were left unanswered and that we had to wait until we saw the bill. We now have the bill and there are even more questions left unanswered.

● (1440)

I do not think we have seen since the war and the invocation of the War Measures Act—and I have checked this with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and others—so much power, so much authority delegated to a private board, commission or group of individuals outside the Government of Canada.

I have questioned senior people in the Department of Finance and talked to various members of the government, and I find that there are many, many questions they themselves cannot answer. What happens to contracts now being negotiated? What is a fair price? How are they really going to determine the profit of many of the commodities referred to? In many cases, they say they do not know. They say that these regulations will be left to the board, to Jean-Luc Pepin, his side-kick Beryl Plumpre and a few others to draft, with their own biases and their own interpretations. They will interpret whether the guidelines will be broken. They will interpret whether certain negotiations can continue and, indeed, whether collective bargaining can continue in this country. Those determinations will not be made in a bill we are going to be debating and voting on, but by a couple of highly paid bureaucrats. That is not the kind of thing that people in this country or people in this House want, approve of or should vote for at this time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nystrom: If I am wrong anywhere throughout this debate, I would like the minister to challenge me. We in this party believe that what we have seen in the white paper, the legislation before us, the comments of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the bureaucrats is unfair, unworkable, politically wrong and misleading. We believe it is a contravention and a contradiction of what the former minister of finance, the hon. member for Ottawa-

Carleton (Mr. Turner), said in the budget last June. I could give quote after quote of what he said when he brought down that budget which was approved by this parliament. The economic direction authorized by this parliament has now been changed. We do not think that is right.

We believe the measures before us are very unfair. Basically, they are effective wage controls on working people with limitations that are very inequitable. We do not have any effective price controls. That is a matter I will deal with later. We have exemptions for many people who are collecting money from interest rates, stocks and bonds, mortgages, and so on. If we are to have a program that is going to work, I do not believe those sectors of the economy should be exempted. We believe that this is unworkable. When talking about wage and price controls of this nature, we should look back at a statement made by the Prime Minister. We should look at this week's issue of *Maclean's* regarding an interview carried out a few weeks ago with the Prime Minister.

We should also look at statements he made a few months ago to the press and the electronic media. I wish to read a quotation from a speech by the former minister of finance, a man who has had a lot of experience in the Department of Finance. He said eight months ago:

The experience of many other countries, most particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, suggest that broad and comprehensive wage and price controls not only tend to disrupt economic growth but over time do little to curb inflation and may, in fact, even aggravate it.—It is an expanding economy that in time will enable us to grow out of inflation by providing the increase in real purchasing power Canadian families need to meet the increased cost of food and energy.

That was the former minister of finance, the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton. Suddenly the government changed its mind. What changed in the economy to make the government change its mind so suddenly? Another point is that the economic package concentrates on inflation. It seems to ignore the slump in the economy, unemployment and the housing crisis in this country. It is also deceiving. One reason it was brought in was that the government wanted to do a good PR job across the country to convince the people it is doing something.

There are indications from around the world that the rate of inflation may drop two or three points in the next few months. That will not be as a result of anything that is happening in this country, but because of external pressures from around the world. If that does happen, the government will try to claim credit for it because of this measure being brought into the House.

Unless amendments are moved, or the minister can clarify this, it is in essence nothing but a wage control package for workers. It will fall squarely on the shoulders of the little people and pensioners. All I can say is that, as a member of this House, I will do what I can not to co-operate with the government unless major amendments are made. I urge Canadians not to co-operate with the government in this measure. It is unfair. It is unequal. It will fall squarely on the shoulders of the ordinary, little people of this country.

Let us look at the proposals step by step. Wages can be easily controlled because they are bargained for. The negotiations are open to the press and the electronic