

Labour Conditions

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): We were convinced then, and we are convinced now—make no mistake about it—that a significant majority of Canadians are behind this program and are supporting it.

An hon. Member: Rubbish.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, there are a lot of people over there with their mouths wide open and their ears closed. I would think they are pretty insensitive to the feelings that are prevalent in this country in terms of concern about inflation, even in their own ridings. They know very well that the Canadian people are behind this program.

An hon. Member: Why don't you start with prices; that is inflation.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): It seems to me that if the assumption is correct that the majority of Canadian people are behind this program as a means successfully to cope with inflation, then what we need is co-operation on the part of everyone involved to make sure it works and works equitably. We have always been asking for that type of co-operation and we now ask for it on the part of the members of this House. Certainly we ask for it from members of the NDP.

Hon. members have asked about prices and profits. I think the position of the board is quite solid in this regard. What has happened here is that the board has intervened in many cases. Where the board has intervened, the companies have not proceeded with what may have been their intended price increases. You cannot very well put a man on an indictment list for having backed off from committing a crime or for not having committed one in the first place. Through the procedures of the board and the accounting procedures that are necessary he has decided not to go ahead with what might have been an intended price increase. This is a very difficult thing to document.

● (2040)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: The first true thing you have said tonight.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): I am not trying to mislead anybody but I do feel that there has been a significant impact. I should like to point out to some skeptics in the NDP just what has happened of recent date. This dates back to a week ago and it reads:

The latest consumer price index confirms that the underlying rate of inflation has diminished to about seven per cent on an annual basis. Statistics Canada reported yesterday that the latest three-month rate of inflation, on an annual basis, is 7.2 per cent.

Mr. Orlikow: Give us last year's increase.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): The overriding concern of the people of Canada and of the labour movement was to cope successfully with inflation. I say this establishes that the program is working and is going to work continually in the interests of the working people in this country.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): On the backs of the workers.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Somebody yells out that old cliché "on the backs of the workers." You can examine what a runaway rate of inflation has done to the labour movement and its leadership in any country where it has occurred. Surely I do not have to give that type of lecture to many of the experienced trade unionists who are part of the NDP. It has played total havoc with the leadership, it has undermined it, and in many cases destroyed it, and has worked in the worst interest of every trade union member in any country where it was allowed to get out of control. Surely that cannot be denied. So when someone says that any government that tries to cope with inflation is not concerned with the labour movement and its members, he is not only deluding himself, he is deluding the Canadian people. I do not believe we have anything to apologize for in this regard. What we are asking for and will continue to ask for is co-operation—

Mr. Orlikow: Tell us how they appeal.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): —of the NDP and the labour movement to help make this work.

An hon. Member: How do they appeal? Tell us that.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): I should like to deal with another point which the leader of the NDP raised. It is a disturbing element. He indicated—if I am incorrect I am sure he will tell me—that the CLC has withdrawn.

Mr. Broadbent: That is not what I said.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Certainly he has indicated that they are considering withdrawing. I think that is a fairly accurate reflection of what he said. I can tell you what I perceive from the actual wording of the press release and having talked to some people connected with it, that it is not considering withdrawing, unless you want to interpret the words "we are reviewing our position with respect to various government agencies" in another way. But that was the precise statement.

Mr. Broadbent: That is because the executive council has not met yet. I think you know that.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): To try to exploit the situation—I hope that is not the intent of the leader of the NDP but it may be the intent of some others—in terms of creating embarrassment for the government by feeding the flames of confrontation, is doing a great disservice to the Canadian people.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): The fact of the matter is that the Canadian Labour Congress has a right to review its participation or involvement in any government agency and no one can deny it that right. But I would like to make it quite clear with respect to the Canada Labour Relations Council that it is not a government agency or a government board. When we are talking about withdrawing from various boards and government agencies I might say that I think that would be very unfortunate indeed, not only for