

Anti-Inflation Program

Mr. Stanfield: I really find it a little difficult to take my hon. friends seriously on this subject. I cannot really believe, much as I respect him, that the leader of the NDP believes the program he outlined here this morning would bring under control the inflation that exists in this country today.

Mr. Broadbent: Why not?

Mr. Stanfield: I have to say, furthermore, that the motion is clearly premature. The bill is still before the committee. Our approach in this party is to be constructive, and the purpose of the motion, it seems to me, is to be destructive.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: It's a lot of baloney.

Mr. Stanfield: Somebody says this is a lot of baloney. I would not characterize the motion as a lot of baloney.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: You called it destructive.

Mr. Stanfield: I am sorry, Madam Speaker, I did not want to excite the members of the NDP too much just before lunch. I do not want to create any indigestion.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): You are speaking to the Chair.

Mr. Stanfield: I am speaking to the Chair. I have kept a proper distance from hon. members in the NDP this morning. We will try, in our party, to persuade the government to modify this program so that it holds promise of moderating inflations, so that it appears to be based on reality, recognizing the limited utility of controls on prices and incomes, so that the program does not involve giving the government the power to impose controls for years and years, bringing about a change in the fundamental nature of our economy, making collective bargaining virtually meaningless because of the length of the period of controls, and arrogating to itself the important economic decisions in this country over that period of time, destroying not only the power of decision of co-operatives and corporations but possibly also emasculating the powers of our provinces over the same period of time. How could we willingly grant such powers for so long to any government, let alone a government which has such a record for opportunism as this one?

I oppose this motion because it is premature and, being premature, is purely destructive in purpose.

An hon. Member: No rationale at all.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: If my friends will look after themselves, I will look after myself. I am sorry, Madam Speaker, I really did not mean to excite those hon. members. I say to the minister that we will continue to try to improve the bill in order to produce a workable program that does not involve a blank cheque of the sort the government is now seeking. I will vote against the motion.

[Mr. Stanfield.]

Mr. Abbott: Madam Speaker, perhaps I might call it one o'clock.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: May I bring to the attention of the House the fact that at one o'clock when the House rose for lunch, the Chair recognized the hon. member for Mississauga (Mr. Abbott) because no member of the Social Credit Party rose. The minister, who was expecting a member of the Social Credit Party to seek the floor, did not rise although he intended to speak after a representative from each of the three opposition parties had spoken. I am sure the House would agree to listen to the intervention of the minister at this time, without affecting the right of the hon. member for Mississauga to speak in due course. Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, may I express my thanks to you and to all hon. members for giving me the opportunity to speak at this time. I wish to respond briefly to a number of points made by the leader of the New Democratic Party.

An hon. Member: In his absence.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): May I say he had the courtesy to speak to me just before the House rose, indicating that he had a conflicting engagement which would make it difficult for him to be here right at two o'clock, but that he would be in the House shortly thereafter, so perhaps he will have an opportunity to hear at first-hand a part at least of what I have to say about his speech.

I think one of the most significant phrases of his speech was the important recognition—and this is a direct quotation—that inflation is the scourge affecting our whole population. Indeed, in all the arguments we have heard from the hon. gentleman and his colleagues inside and outside the House for the past four weeks, they have indicated what they were not prepared to do, what they were not prepared to support and what they were not prepared to give in relation to this program against inflation.

I think it would have been justifiable for one to have arrived at the conclusion that they were not concerned about inflation at all, and indeed that their principal motive was to oppose the present program. Therefore, I welcome that clarification on his part and the fact that he and his colleagues are concerned. I recognize that he has given himself and his party a rather difficult brief to carry in this particular regard, because he has had to start off on the assumption, not justified by any economic fact, that increased labour costs can in no way affect the cost of goods and services which people buy in the community. He has taken the position, of course, that wherever wage or salary increases might take place in respect of individual firms or the community as a whole, they will not in fact