

*Anti-Inflation Act*

favour of these controls while the government was not, or were they not in favour and some government members were in favour of them?

Members are being called to order for not talking about the bill, but let me tell you, Madam Speaker, that I have been here for a long time and I have read a lot of bills. I have not understood all of them but I did at least have a pretty good idea of what would be their effect. I was absent when the white paper was published and I had about the same opportunity that the general public had; I heard the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) address the public on television, like Churchill but not nearly as well or as effectively. I do not think he put the message across in a way that is going to get much support, because the public have less faith in him and his ability to solve this problem these days. I listened to his pitch on television and I did not understand it. I talked to my constituents, and they said that they could not understand it either.

I have now read the bill but have not been able to get anything from it. If you are able to tell hon. members, Madam Speaker, that they are out of order because their remarks do not relate to the bill, then congratulations. There is really nothing in the bill that is definitive in any way, shape or form. The only date in the bill is the date it comes into effect, which is the date of the television program. The bill has no proclamation period, and there are no regulations or guidelines. The bill merely indicates that there will be wage and salary controls.

If hon. members want to know anything about this legislation they will have to read the white paper, which I presume is the guidelines. However, it really depends which publication you have. The last one I received was considered to be the minister's speech, the "Program for National Action". The first publication was the highlights, and the "Program for National Action" is the same information but under a different cover.

If this legislation is going to be effective it must have the support of the Canadian public. The Canadian public must recognize that there is a problem to be faced and they must be willing to make sacrifices. They must be sure that the situation is the same for all and that that is the way the problem will be solved. If that is the program the government is trying to sell, I suggest it scrap the program outlined in its "Attack on Inflation". Anyone reading that will be aware that this legislation has absolutely nothing to do with prices as they affect the individual. There is no indication of legislation there.

The board that is going to be set up will involve the employment of between 200 to 500 people. What is a woman to do if the price of baby food, or a package of cereal, or a piece of meat, or a can of vegetables goes up 10, 15 or 20 per cent? Her husband's wages are frozen. Is she to write to her member of parliament or to all members of parliament? I suggest she would have to mimeograph her letter and run off 700 to 800 copies, which she would send to all members of parliament, Senators, and members of the Anti-Inflation Board; she will be wasting her time but it will probably make her feel better.

There is no machinery in this bill to control prices. If the housewife, the worker, or indeed anybody is to believe in this program, it must work fairly and equally for everyone. Wages are very easy to control. If I had been asked to

[Mr. Peters.]

come up with a program and I had been told by senior civil servants that this legislation is what I require I should have left out the part of the bill dealing with wage and salary controls, and instead controlled prices, because if you control prices, wages do not need to go up.

• (2140)

Many people forget that the figures being bandied around in relation to wage increases are 45 per cent and 50 per cent, but are related to long-term contracts, probably over three years, covering the year that has gone by and two years in the future. Everyone knows the cost of living has gone up 12 per cent, so you project the 12 per cent over the three-year contract and you arrive at 36 per cent. The workers want an increase over that of perhaps only 5 per cent, and that does not seem to be unreasonable, but it gives you another 15 per cent over the three year period and you wind up with the 50 per cent increase. All they are asking for is enough to stay even and maintain the standard of living to which they have become accustomed. This obviously is not an inflationary factor.

There are many things which are inflationary that are not mentioned. It is easy to control wages and salaries. That is relatively simple because there is usually a third party involved who is only too happy to control them. When you attempt to control the price of commodities then you run into great difficulties. Except during the war we in this country have never been able to control commodity prices in any way, shape, or form. During the war we accomplished this at the expense of one very large segment of our economy, namely, the agricultural segment. We appealed to those in the agricultural industry more than to anyone else to hold the line and keep down prices as their war effort. They did an admirable job, but they have been paying for it over the years since, as they have never really been able to get their prices up to the necessary level. It is easy to control wages, but it is impossible to control prices under our system.

I have looked at these proposals as they relate to the people in my area, and people in all parts of Canada, who belong to unions and who have been out on strike for some period of time. They now want to make a settlement but they do not intend to accept 8 per cent plus 2 per cent.

There are to be some exceptions, but how one obtains an exception no one seems to know. Maybe Jean-Luc can make an exception if he wants, or maybe Mrs. Plumtre can exempt someone.

**An hon. Member:** How about the minister?

**Mr. Peters:** I am not sure that we would want to ask the minister, nor am I sure that that should be his job. I am sure it is not going to be the little guy in National Revenue in Sudbury who will make that decision. When I asked him about the subject he said he had sent all that information to me yesterday by telex. I think he assumed I was in the department for which he was working. This was not an inquiry as far as he was concerned. He thought I wanted his name again, and he had already sent that in by telex the day before. These people are not going to be in a position to make exceptions.

Many exceptions will be made and, as soon as one is made, then as far as the average individual is concerned