

Anti-Inflation Program

British Columbia. With some help from the CBC in showing a film called "The Reckoning" twice within six weeks, this was to be a plank in the NDP platform. Thanks to some very fast work by the former chairman of BC Hydro, who set the record straight—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Order, please. I must again interrupt the hon. member. Allow me to read the motion. Mr. Broadbent, seconded by Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre), moved:

That this House rejects the government's anti-inflationary program—

I ask the hon. member to limit his remarks to the motion.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With all due respect, I will continue because one of the issues that was to be an election issue in British Columbia was the failure of the federal government to act on inflation. Surely that is germane to the fact that we now have this motion in the House.

The reason for having this motion escaped the Speaker. He found it necessary to comment on it. With all due respect, Madam Speaker, I cannot see why, when the Speaker of this House earlier today was constrained to talk about the reason for this motion being on the order paper, I cannot talk about the reason for it being before us.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Twice in this speech the hon. member has reflected on the Chair. The Chair asked questions about this motion, but ruled that it was in order. I submit for this hon. member to question that decision is a reflection on the Chair that he is not entitled to make.

Mr. Johnston: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, not for a moment have I questioned the ruling of the Chair. Not for a moment have I questioned the propriety of the ruling. Obviously we are in a debate on this motion. I am talking about no other matter but this motion that the NDP felt constrained to present to the House today.

For a while it looked as though the back-to-work issue in British Columbia could be an election issue there, but the government moved and the unions did not provide the issue. We have heard a fair amount about strikes in this debate today.

When this very control program was initiated by those opposite, it met with a scornful reaction from the premier of the province of British Columbia. For a while it looked as though the very control program that we are debating this afternoon would be the issue for the election there. However, on casting around it was discovered that there was a fair body of support for it in the public opinion not only in the province of British Columbia but across the entire country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnston: If there was any support for that program it was due entirely to the campaign run by the Progressive Conservative party and the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) a year ago. It was a residue of that campaign which was unsuccessful then.

● (1610)

So we have this motion today. It speaks of controlling prices and effective control over incomes. And we note that in the Province of British Columbia in the last three years and several months the people have learned a great deal about government controls when initiated by that party, one which has beggared the forest industry, the great industry which British Columbia possesses; for the first time the industry is going to declare a loss position at the end of the year. What else? The Barrett government has stalled the mining industry in that province. Exploration crews have departed.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Order!

Mr. Johnston: It has frightened the agricultural industry through its attempts to back off the agriculture support program which was set up. This, surely, has something to do with price controls since it affects products which are very important to this land.

It has alienated the teachers, of all people, those to whom the success of the campaign in 1972 was owed more than to any other group. And it has frightened the ecologists. The premier of that province would dearly love to close down some mining activities but he doesn't dare because of the effect on provincial revenues. It has alienated the native people, lost the one native MLA who sat in the legislature for so long. It has lost \$100 million in welfare over-runs which have never been explained. It has destroyed the automobile insurance industry and honoured the wrecking crew by appointing him its Agent-General in London. Thus we have a dismal history of controls in that province—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Order!

Mr. Johnston:—and a rather strange motion before us today whose timing must be questioned both by members of this House and by everyone who takes seriously the entire issue of controls which have been imposed by that government while federal controls are being challenged by that party, and while another set of controls have been imposed by a provincial government in this country of the same type. I cannot for the life of me see how I could possibly be out of order if I talk about controls as they are being applied in British Columbia.

Mr. Alkenbrack: Right on!

Mr. Johnston: We have a price freeze there, and an election called in the middle of it. I do not think there has ever been in the history of this nation a more deliberate attempt to blackmail the public than this calling of a winter election in the middle of a 68-day price freeze.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Order!

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Again I must remind the hon. member that he is straying from the subject of the motion.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is not for me in my wisdom, or lack of it, to predict the result of the forthcoming election, although I see some attempts being made from that corner to second guess me. I shall not