

*Prices and Incomes Commission*

deputy minister of labour of the government of Canada, and Mr. George E. Freeman, director of research for the Bank of Canada, have been appointed commissioners.

I should like to ask leave of the house to table their biographies covering the training and experience of these four members, all of which makes them, I think, eminently qualified to begin this new and important assignment. On behalf of myself and also on behalf of the Canadian government I should like to say how pleased and grateful I am to them for accepting these appointments and for choosing this way to serve their country.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Basford:** Recruiting of the counsel and staff, the clerks and technical advisers of the commission, is now under way, and the chairman has informed me that the commission will be able to begin its work on July 2.

**Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East):** Mr. Speaker, in the same spirit I will try to be circumscribed by the comments of Your Honour. I noted that the minister said that his statement would be short. It may have been short, but it took a long time for us to reach this point in time. It is almost six months now since the white paper on price stability was presented and the announcement of this commission was made in this house; it is only now that the personnel of this very important commission have been appointed.

**Mr. Basford:** We wanted to get the right people.

**Mr. McGrath:** It took the minister almost five months to appoint the chairman of the commission, and it is incredible that he had to look no further than his own backyard to find a suitable person. It also seems to me incredible that it took another month for the minister to bring the house up to date on the other appointments to the commission. It would not be difficult to anticipate that the government would look for a banker, and where else to look than the Bank of Canada? It would not be difficult to anticipate that the government would appoint somebody who was familiar with the labour laws and labour scene in this country, and where else to look than the Department of Labour? Any Liberal in the province of Quebec would anticipate the appointment of Paul Gérin-Lajoie.

Why did it take six months to fill these appointments, Mr. Speaker? During all that

[Mr. Basford.]

time inflation was taking its toll in this country. Prices were going up—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. McGrath:** We can only conclude that the government—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I must seek the hon. member's co-operation. I would not think that he was now abiding by either the spirit or the letter of the law. I take the liberty of reminding the hon. member of the terms of the Standing Order, which requires ministers to make statements that ought not to provoke debate. In speaking on behalf of his party the hon. member is under the same limitation. It would seem to me that if he is to go on and debate the question of inflation and other very general problems he is definitely going beyond the terms of the statement made by the minister. I seek his co-operation so that we may go on with the business of the house.

**Mr. McGrath:** Mr. Speaker, would you allow me to conclude by saying that the government has its priorities all mixed up. The government has failed to recognize the urgency of the most serious problem facing the country today, namely, rising prices, the continuous rise in the cost of living index and the effect that this has on the average man and woman in this country. I suggest to the minister and the government that, if they want to know what is the most urgent problem facing the country, all they have to do is to talk to the man on the street. He will readily tell them that the most serious problem facing this country today is rising prices, the increase in the cost of living index, and poverty. It is about time that this government got the message.

**Mr. Max Saltzman (Waterloo):** Mr. Speaker, in replying to the statement of the minister let me say first of all that no one questions the training and experience of the people appointed by the minister. What is being questioned is the intention and the credibility of the minister and the government. This is what is at issue.

There is no question in my mind that the government has had the power to do something about prices for a long time now but has failed to take any action in this area. Many of us have reason to suspect that with this commission the government is simply throwing another camouflage over its failure to act. The government's delay in appointing