

*Increased Cost of Living*

● (1710)

I read with some interest, but I must say with little hope, the motion proposed by the Conservative party, with a view to determining if it answered the question I had in mind. The hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies) presented his address, and we are still wondering what, in fact, the opposition parties would do and where they would go after the 90-day freeze. We still do not know what they intend to freeze. We heard a lot of criticism about the NDP and the problems it had with its waffle group, but I suggest the Tory waffling that is being done here makes that NDP group look like a bunch of pikers.

Let us look at the record. In April, 1972, when the Conservatives thought they had absolutely no chance of winning the election but expected to have at least a respectable showing and this was when leadership candidates were rattling their sabres, being more interested in the leadership than politics—what was their view? I suggest the leader of the NDP hit the nail on the head when he said there was no comment about dividends or incomes, but strictly comment about wage and price controls. In any event, in the view of the Conservatives they were not going to form a government and it was quite safe for them to talk in this way. They did not talk about dividends or professional fee control; they talked strictly about wage and price control. After the election in October, 1972, they were as surprised probably as we were when they realized they might be asked to form a government. What was their position then? They still talked about controls if necessary, but not necessarily controls. That has a familiar 1940 ring to it, and I suggest that is where the Conservatives are, about 30 years behind the times.

Then, they saw that this party was going to form the government and they began to hedge their bets a little bit. At that time they said they did not think this was the time for control. We then heard the two financial critics of the Conservative party, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, one saying he would be dumb today because the other was dumb yesterday; one saying this is not the time for controls and the other going on the CTV national network saying the time has come to bring in a temporary freeze all the way down the line, not stopping even at the farm gate.

This was supposed to be a temporary freeze. Then, the people of Canada spoke up and said that you cannot control everything; there are some areas beyond the capacity of Canadians to control. The Conservatives said then they would not control those things they could not control. They did not want to hurt the farmer and the fishermen, so they intended to stop at the farm gate. I suggest that, in fact, is meaningless. You are either going to have controls or you do not have controls. You cannot have half-way measures, and I suggest that proposal does not even go half way but only works to the detriment of the Canadian worker and consumer. I suggest there is no support in the country for that position. I suggest it is very easy, and a good political pitch, for the Progressive Conservatives to say that because prices are going up they intend to impose controls, but when you pin them down you find they do not know where controls are to be put on, how they are to be put on, or what results these might have.

[Mr. Cullen.]

It is interesting to note that this motion provides for discussion with the provinces, industry and labour. The food prices committee carried out such consultations and actually had these people appear before it. That committee had before it representatives from the CLC and we know what their position is. They are against control. That committee and representatives from the governments of Alberta and Manitoba, one Progressive Conservative and one NDP government, and they are also against controls. The committee had a representative from the Canadian Cattlemen's Association before it who also indicated opposition to controls. The committee had representatives of consumer associations appear, and they said this was not the time for controls. Why is there a need for consultation when we already know the position these people take?

Members of the Progressive Conservative party have been saying that we should show some leadership. I suggest we have shown leadership but that they are bankrupt in this regard. They know that no one is in favour of controls but they really have nothing to suggest except a 90-day freeze. They suggest we should put the lid on for 90 days and then watch it blow off after that. They know that we will be in power and that they can hedge their position. This is only a political promise.

What kind of controls are we getting from Progressive Conservative parties? We have seen an example of this in Ontario. Thank God for an effective opposition in Ontario. That government proposed a 7 per cent energy tax, but fortunately the opposition parties were successful in having that tax rescinded. What did that government propose to do about the rising cost of living? It simply increased the sales tax by 40 per cent, and that is not the way I would like to see the federal government act. Fortunately for the people in the rest of Canada, this increase only applies in Ontario. Imagine what might have resulted if the federal government had increased sales tax by 40 per cent instead of dropping it by 47 per cent for those in the \$5,000 income bracket.

I do not intend to reiterate what was said by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner), but he did highlight the government's aims, for those who were listening to him, although I think there were very few. I wish I had the ability of the leader of the NDP to put the Tories in their place regarding their behaviour and courtesy shown in this House. It was very difficult to hear what the Minister of Finance had to say because of the interjections by the Tweedledums and Tweedledees across the way who realized that the minister was punching holes in the one argument put forward by the Conservatives that might have had at least some merit.

**An hon. Member:** Who wrote that speech, Jack?

**Mr. Cullen:** I wrote this one and I think it's pretty good. In any event, the Minister of Finance did outline the highlights, for those in this part of the Chamber, and admitted that there were areas where no control is possible. The hon. member for Don Valley waved his hands and admitted there were areas that cannot be controlled, but apparently he did not want to hear about them. He tried to brush aside those remarks, but he was kind enough to state these were not excuses. He actually conceded there