

Anti-Inflation Act

to provide, in any legislation passed, the most salutary means of supervision by parliament. This is one aspect of public life which distinguishes our party from the governing Liberal party: our unreserved belief in the supremacy of parliament and the right to supervise, on behalf of our constituents, the actions of the government, particularly a government which shows itself to be power-struck and imbued with the belief that there is a divinity in the Liberal hierarchy which gives them the right not just to govern but to rule.

Under these circumstances, I would be most unhappy to see this legislation passed in its present form without there being some capacity left in parliament to exercise its ultimate supervision.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: Let me say that I utter these words with complete sincerity and deep earnestness: the end product of the weakening of the legislative system and the power grab of the executive system is dictatorship. There is no doubt about that. Whether it is done in one bite, or by gradualism and the whittling away process, is immaterial. There are countries today in the world, in Europe, which have gone so far along this road, often under the feeble disguise of socialism or democratic socialism, they cannot turn back. The tragedy is that as they float along on their easy ride, they do not even know their boat has been caught in a destructive whirlpool.

I turn to the question of information, knowledge, facts. As to this, also, there is no argument as to my position, the position of my leader and of our party. We have stood for a number of years for a program of freedom of information so that the people of this country will know what are the facts, what is the truth, and the basis upon which the governments are operating. I say we have no confidence in this government or in its good faith on this issue. We insist that it must be answerable to this House, on behalf of those who will be so deeply affected. We will want to know what discretion it is exercising under the bill, how it is exercising it, and why.

Here we have a Prime Minister and a cabinet which, almost up to the final moment when it produced the program out of which this bill was formulated, continued to assert in budgets, in speeches, in debates, in and out of the House, that things were improving, that there was no need for controls; which has, in general, engaged in a measure of calculated deception through secrecy, misinformation, half truths and outright lies. I say, Mr. Speaker, that we will expect, before this bill is passed, that some of its very rigid provisions at the present time with regard to confidentiality—

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Surely the hon. member will withdraw that last remark.

Mr. Baldwin:—will have to be amended and provide for freedom of information. Because of our experience in the past—

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. The hon. member referred to this government as having engaged in "outright lies". Surely

that is not a parliamentary expression. I think he should withdraw it.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I think what we are talking about is privilege of members of the House. If the minister wants to indicate that I was talking about him, of course I will be glad to withdraw the remark. But I was not talking about him, Mr. Speaker, I was talking about the government; and the government, of course, includes ministers, deputy ministers, stooges, parliamentary assistants—so I would defy the thin-skinned and sensitive minister to find anything in the precedents which provides that I am not entitled to say that. However, if the minister is really worried about it, I will be—

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): It is parliamentary practice that you should withdraw.

Mr. Baldwin: As it applies to members. If the minister is that thin-skinned about it, so sensitive and worried about it, I am perfectly prepared to say I might have stretched my imagination just a little bit.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): That is scurrilous.

Mr. Baldwin: Before this bill is passed there are some other things that we think the government should do. Because of our experience in the past, and because of the waffling in the speeches during this debate with regard to the question of government restraint, we should require and should obtain, before the bill is passed, a commitment of the firmest kind that the government will exercise fiscal restraint—not just the airy-fairy, vague statements of the past, always made with tongue in cheek, never meant and never carried out, always left in the realm of fantasy. If the government is to be credible, it is essential that before the debate is concluded a responsible minister stands in this House and by verse, chapter and number, gives this commitment. If they do not, then I suggest it will sadly impair their credibility in the country for the purpose of the program which they have proposed in this legislation.

Let me return to the point I made at the beginning. If any form of incomes policy is going to work, there must be the utmost trust and confidence between the governed and the governors, and that confidence cannot be maintained unless the governors are prepared to take the governed into their confidence, to tell the facts truthfully, honestly, accompanying the decisions which are being made. I am convinced that the people of this country have the capacity, endurance and willingness to assume the responsibilities which they must to help solve this inflation, but only if they have respect for those at the top who are making the rules and can expect to be told the truth. I repeat, before the bill is passed it should contain a statutory right of access to information.

I could talk about the constitutional issues, Mr. Speaker, but this is not the place to do so. The minister and I have been over this ground before on his energy bills, where we have tangled over the constitutionality question. I am not going to waste the time of the House by engaging in another argument with him. I left those other debates, however, wondering who the professor was who passed him in constitutional law. I often wonder if he was at the