

Price Stability

some means by which the Parliament of Canada in general and we in this House in particular, have the opportunity of telling our people what they must be told, I think we should beware. It is the business of the opposition to oppose generously, properly and in a constructive way. But surely hon. members on the government side must have some qualms, some fears, as to what they are doing to the people of their country when they so docilely permit the government to have these powers.

I have grave doubts about this matter and cannot be convinced, having read the motion as it now stands, that anything useful can come out of it, particularly after the minister repudiated the very sensible suggestion we made which would have permitted a more intelligent, wider and more constructive approach to be taken by the committee in dealing with the recommendations and reports of the Prices and Incomes Commission.

Surely the members of this House who are to be on the committee, members who have a direct liaison with the people they represent, who travel from place to place in Canada and who, not only in terms of interest but in terms of self-interest wish to find out what people are thinking about inflation and the various reports and recommendations of the Prices and Incomes Commission, should be given the right to make recommendations to this House through the medium of this committee, whether or not the government wants them to do so. Yet the government is saying by this motion and by what has been indicated by the minister, "No; you will not be allowed to do that. You will only be allowed to deal with and consider the reports of the Prices and Incomes Commission and such other matters as we in our graciousness and magnanimity entrust you to deal with."

Who could have confidence in a committee of that kind? For this reason alone I would be very dubious of the value of the reports. I hope that before a final decision is made by the Chair on the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) there will be a change on the part of the government, that the minister who is inflexible may become flexible, that the minister who is now unreasonable may become reasonable and will accept at least that part of the amendment which corresponds to the amendment moved by the hon. member for Wellington-Grey, which would give more teeth to this committee.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I hope the hon. member will not retreat. I hope he will ask the minister to accept all of the amendment.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated my position. Mind you, the hon. member is very eloquent. Of course, we in this party are always prepared to listen to reasonable arguments. However, we do not hear them too often, except when they come from our own ranks.

What about the value of the committee itself? The minister referred to some universal recognition given at the recent federal-provincial conference but he was very selective and very shrewd in his statement. He did not read from the statement of conclusions dated February 17, 1970, which by coincidence I happen to have in my file, when painting a glowing picture of the acceptance by the federal-provincial conference of this proposition and the validity and value of the Prices and Incomes Commission. He forgot to read what appears on page 3, which is as follows:

The conference confirmed the determination of the federal and provincial governments to co-ordinate and renew efforts to bring back price stability and sustained economic growth and social progress throughout Canada.

● (5:30 p.m.)

I can accept that part; this is what the minister had in mind. I continue:

At the same time, the conference recognized that inflationary pressures were distributed unevenly across the country, and that some parts of Canada were suffering from unemployment or lack of development as well as from inflation.

As Your Honour well knows, that fact is recognized in a province not so far from this city where today the voters are coming to a decision. Some parts of Canada are suffering from unemployment and a lack of development as well as from inflation.

In view of this, it was recognized that anti-inflationary policies should be applied as far as possible in a way which would not add to the difficulties of regions which were experiencing high unemployment or economic problems.

The Prime Minister should have that passage read to him every day. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) should read and understand it. He sat in at that conference, yet he is ignoring the conclusion to which he as a member of the conference gave credibility and acceptance.

In this connection, some Premiers maintained that, at the same time as broad anti-inflationary measures are carried out, the federal government