

I wonder if the Prime Minister will find enough defeated political candidates among his friends to fill the gaps. Of course, this bill will be referred to the standing committee of the House for further study. We want it to be amended according to the priorities which we, of the Social Credit Party of Canada, have mentioned in the House. For if the bill is sent back to the House for third reading without amendment, be assured that I for one will vote against it. I shall not take part in such discrimination against the low income groups in our province and our country.

Mr. Hal Herbert (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, of all the ills afflicting our Canadian society, inflation is doubtless at the present time the most intolerable, the most insidious. The most intolerable because, more so than any other, it exacerbates social injustices because it strikes first and foremost the weakest and most helpless citizens. The most insidious, because we tend to consider inflation as a fatality against which we can do nothing but save our skin at the expense of the neighbour. Until very recently, that feeling of helplessness and fatality was all the more stronger as inflation came from foreign countries over which we had but little control.

That holds true of the OPEC countries which, in 1973, increased fourfold within a few months the price of their oil, totally disrupting the western economy. It also holds true of our trade partners who were more severely affected by the energy crisis than we were and who had no qualms about exporting their inflation to us with their cars, their television sets and their good products.

Carried away by the tide which engulfed the whole western economy, we could do nothing but cushion the impact of too sharp an increase in prices and do our best to protect our more helpless fellow-citizens against an inflation which came mainly from abroad.

It is in this light that the steps taken by the federal government in recent years should be seen. But the time when inflation came almost exclusively from abroad is over. For some months, through our own lack of discipline, our problems have considerably worsened. And now the fires of inflation are being blithely stoked up from within.

Nobody wants to acknowledge the fact that the oil crisis has really brought about a redistribution of wealth in the world and that we cannot live as if the OPEC countries had not wrenched some \$112 billion from industrialized countries like ours in the year 1973-74 only.

While the Canadian economy has registered in 1974 a growth rate of 2.8 per cent and is likely to be lower in 1975, labour agreements gave wage increases of about 18 per cent. Many companies took the advantage not only to unload on their customers the rise in their production cost but also to unduly increase profit margins.

All that has strongly contributed to make us less competitive on the international market. Hence a decline in our economic activity and the chance to see our unemployment rate rise once again.

Before this situation, the federal government attempted, in a first move, to bring all partners of the Canadian economy to set for themselves, on a voluntary basis, certain restrictions necessary for the recovery of the economic health of the country.

Anti-Inflation Act

Our efforts, one has to admit, have been unsuccessful. That is why the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the new Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) decided to be much more directive today.

Having learned from last year's experience, the government has just put forward a certain number of rules and guidelines which are intended to check rising prices and salaries.

Starting Monday night, October 13, at midnight, these guidelines have the force of law for the federal government and all its civil servants, Crown corporations, private firms employing over 500 personnel and all companies in the building industry with over 20 staff. All other businesses and workers will have to follow suit voluntarily if we wish to draw the maximum benefit from this anti-inflation program.

● (2020)

[*English*]

We are living in a country where we take freedom for granted, one of the richest countries in the world with resources to solve every problem but one, namely, inflation; and inflation really is not one problem but a complex of problems summed up in one: how to control the energy of freedom before there is no freedom left to control.

A free society functions on a belief in equality and justice, on support of law and order, and on a willingness to put the public interest first. Last, but far from least, it functions on the faith that it will function. Today the system is being wracked by extremes of violence and apathy, spawning cynicism, illegality, disorder, self-interest, and doubt.

The causes are rooted deep in society's material goals, in the consequent decline of values and the decay of social disciplines now turning the long-term trend to equality into a drive for short-term rights. We sold our way of life with rhetoric about equality, and today the young, and the not so young, want everything going and want it now. Equality is replacing religion as the opiate of the people at a time when the trend to bigness, big business, big labour, and big government, is alienating the leaders and the led.

Society is in ferment. Everyone wants more rights. This translates in almost every case into demands on governments, demands by students to decide how they should be educated; demands by consumer groups to restrict the power of corporations; demands by environmentalists, minorities, and women's groups; demands for subsidies, loans, tax concessions, and welfare of all kinds; legitimate demands, but they all add up to more money at a time when the economy is giving us less. Everyone knows this; every group knows that to take more means less for others, yet everyone acts as though restraint should be practised by someone else.

Our freedom depends on restraint; its energy needs to be checked, as all machines have limits and when they are exceeded they self-destruct. Freedom and restraint are opposite sides of the same coin, but lately freedom seems like a coin with one badly worn side. Bit by bit our restraints are wearing away.

Inflation is a symptom of the lack of restraint, a symptom of the underlying illness. But it is more than a symp-