

Anti-Inflation Act

May I point out that the price of wheat has fallen by almost 50 per cent? This has nothing to do with the wage level in Canada; it is based entirely on the demand for the grain in the western world which purchases most of our crop. I contend, therefore, as I believe the facts will prove, that we have not licked inflation and that the program has been a failure, as we in this party predicted and as most economists predicted at the time.

To meet the so-called threat of inflation the government had another program beside the limiting of wage and salary claims and, supposedly, the limiting of prices. Let me remind hon. members of what the Minister of Finance has finally had to admit after a year and a half of prodding from the New Democrats. As we predicted, the controls on wages and salaries has been effective because increases in this sector were easy to identify. But the minister is now admitting that, between the legislation on one hand and lax monitoring by the Anti-Inflation Board on the other, many people at the top of many of the corporations in Canada have been able to secure very substantial increases—not just 6 per cent or 8 per cent, or 10 per cent, but 25 per cent, 50 per cent, and 75 per cent in salaries ranging from \$100,000 upward.

As we forecast, no way has been found under this program to limit increases in income enjoyed by self-employed people like doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects. I do not know whether an attempt was really made.

An hon. Member: What about pharmacists?

Mr. Orlikow: And pharmacists, too, I suppose. These people have continued to get whatever the traffic will bear.

● (2150)

Every aspect of the so-called fight against inflation was a call by the federal government for restraint in government spending. All governments got involved in this, regardless of which party was involved—Liberals, Conservatives, Social Credit, and the New Democratic Party. The government was able to go before the people and indicate that it was showing restraint. It was not going to spend \$30 million in Manitoba or \$50 million in Ontario. Actually, I forget what the saving was by the federal government. But it forgot to tell the people that every time a million dollars is saved fewer people are employed.

Unemployment for every month of this year has been at an all-time high. In April unemployment on a seasonally adjusted basis was 8.3 per cent, or 932,000 people. In May the figure was 7.9 per cent. Newspapers reported that as a victory because it was half a per cent lower than the month before. If one read down to the end of the article, he would realize that 7.9 per cent was almost 1 per cent higher than the month of May in the previous year.

In my city of Winnipeg there is a low rate of unemployment, as there is in the province of Manitoba, as compared to Quebec, the Atlantic provinces, Ontario or British Columbia. I have done some inquiring in my constituency and have found out that graduating classes in faculties such as education,

[Mr. Orlikow.]

social work, and engineering are having difficulty finding employment. That applies also to the graduating classes of community colleges in our province. The students were encouraged to go to community colleges rather than university, because an arts degree would not give them a job but training in one of the many skills which are provided in our community colleges would give them a job.

The graduating classes of the universities and the community colleges are finding it virtually impossible to get jobs. The best educated young people we have ever had are not able to find jobs in June of 1977. In some of the industrial plants, the steel fabricating plants and the agricultural plants in Manitoba, we are finding that workers with 20 years of seniority with one company, and who have never drawn unemployment insurance benefits, are now unemployed. The situation in Manitoba is far better than it is in Quebec.

In Quebec virtually 10 per cent—one out of every ten people—of the people who want work and are available for work cannot find work. In Nova Scotia it is substantially more than that. On Cape Breton Island the official figure for unemployment is 17 per cent, and the real figure is probably closer to 25 per cent. That is a part of the price we are paying for the government's anti-inflation program and its program of restraint.

As I have indicated, we are fighting inflation unsuccessfully and on the backs of the unemployed. When this program was first proposed we said that it would not work, that it would be inequitable and would result in more unemployment. Unfortunately our fears have proven to be correct. We believe, and we have believed all along, that the anti-inflation program would not work and would be unfair. We continue to call for a national incomes policy which would be fair to all the people of Canada. We call on the Government of Canada to make a major commitment for itself and for the people of Canada to a program of full employment.

We do not accept the arguments being put forth by so-called experts, who are employed at comfortable salaries, that full employment is no longer an unemployment rate of between 3 per cent and 4 per cent, that in fact it is something in the neighbourhood of 5½ per cent or 6 per cent. This country has the resources, the raw materials, the manpower and the skills to put the people of Canada who want to work back to work. This party is committed to that. We call on the government to adopt policies which will put the people of Canada back to work. One of the first steps necessary is to eliminate the anti-inflation program which has been a failure from the day it started.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I certainly wanted to rise and take part in this important debate, for I could not do it last Friday. This is why I have felt it necessary to rise tonight at the very last minute. Mr. Speaker, may I call it ten o'clock?