

So I quite simply say that this bill is being brought before us for purely cosmetic reasons. I say so very simply, publicly and formally. If it were not against parliamentary rules, I would actually say hypocritical, but that is a bit too strong. So I simply say cosmetic.

We now find ourselves in the last period for presenting reports and it is already foreseen that the mandate of the Anti-Inflation Board will extend beyond December 31 for everything that concerns its regular administration. I would have thought that this was included in the act passed in 1975, but one has to go back to the debates of 1975 to realize that the opposition of the day had indeed clearly informed the public and criticized the bill as presented—I think it was then Bill C-89—and we have never witnessed such a jumble, a package of measures, devised God knows where for the purpose of being presented to us in a hurry. I still recall vividly the first meetings on the anti-inflation bill which took place in the railways committee room and the eagerness of government members. If a member of the opposition dared criticize or challenge the measure, he was guilty of obstruction. The measure was deemed necessary! Indeed it was imperative in October and November 1975 but these very same members, under the guidance of the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), were all heard during the 1974 electoral campaign condemning any form of control over incomes and prices.

Well, there was a difference of course. In the Bible we read about the conversion of St. Paul on the road to Damascus, but in this case, between I don't know where and Ottawa, during the year 1974-75, the conversion of Saint-Pierre took place. I call him "Saint-Pierre" just for the sake of comparison because I strongly doubt that he or myself ever wish him to be canonized! Isn't it quite singular for instance to see how his apostles, the government members, all came into the fold. Their conversion to controls was instantaneous and those of us who can still feel some measure of indulgence toward them noted that there were some shortcomings in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, if a member of the opposition, if my colleague from York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens), if the member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies) and others, ever dared criticize the bill, we were strongly lashed at not only by the government but by a biased press which was poorly informed on the subject. At that time, how should I say, the pass word—

● (1552)

[English]

It was the in thing to be in favour of controls, that sudden conversion, and to be with it. It was the spirit of Canada's galloping Prime Minister, no matter what road, what lane, or what lost trail he might either gallop, trot, walk, or merely meander on.

True enough, there were certain spirits who were against this. We in the official opposition divorced ourselves entirely from the motivations of the New Democratic Party opposing controls. I had seen their flip-flops during 1974. Their leader at that time spent three weeks during the election campaign

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trying to destroy the program here in Ontario, and that is the only place where he was at all effective.

● (1602)

The program of wage and price controls had been advocated by the Conservative party since early 1973. I do not for one moment subscribe to the view that it was wrong to disclose this particular type of program in detail to the public of Canada. Everyone knows that in editorials and in all sorts of places opposition parties are being asked to outline their programs weekly, much like supermarkets such as Steinberg's, Dominion, Loblaws and A&P in eastern Canada, and Woodward's or Safeways in western Canada. The people want to know weekly what is the price for cabbage, pork chops and orange juice, as well as for other things in the supermarkets. They apparently also want to know the weekly stand of political parties on any particular point. All I am suggesting is that this sort of reaction to a disclosed program is totally belied by the performance of the Canadian public in 1974. At that time the public had a most essentially detailed program that would affect the economy. It had been laid out and was not something brought in at the last moment. It was outlined here on the floor of this House.

In the budget debate of 1973 I first disclosed that we had such a program, and my colleague, the hon. member for Don Valley fleshed it out as we agreed would be done during the time we had for the debate. That program was laid out. There was no surprise in it and it did not vary, except perhaps in the minds of some of the so-called pundits and political critics.

The NDP assaulted the program. They were totally against it. The then leader offered a price review board as an alternative. What on earth was he using to try to delude the public? He was using another variation of wage and price controls. Such a price review board would place emphasis on prices and presumably profits, but an integral part of price is the cost of rent, of financing and of labour. When I refer to the cost of labour I do not mean only labour on piece work, but also managerial salaries. These costs are all part and parcel of the cost of production. The prices review board would have looked at all suggestions for increases in prices to the public.

This was just a flip-flop, and the net result was that the electorate in Ontario and British Columbia gave the NDP the back of its hand. The leader of the party lost his seat, I would suggest, because of his total lack of sincerity in attacking the program of wage and price controls as it applied in 1974. As a matter of fact, this government did the greatest possible disservice to the public of Canada, and we are the inheritors of the resulting problems in 1978, by its dilly-dallying and deliterious actions, and even by its wrong actions in 1972.

The 1972 budget of John Turner was a totally uncalled for expansionary budget, particularly when you can remember that the Prime Minister had boasted in 1969 that inflation had been licked and wrestled to the ground. He did so even though figures from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics or any other probe indicated a straight line. The Prime Minister was deluding the Canadian public that he knew what he was talking about.