

*Anti-Inflation Act*

It seems to me that aside from that—and the government is now embarking upon negotiations, commencing today, with the provinces—there are substantial obstacles that will have to be overcome no matter whether the government decides it is constitutional. The very least it will have to do—for a change, I would suggest—is deal with the provincial authorities in a frank and candid manner. I think that is the government's intention, quite frankly. I believe the government is going to try that particular approach to see if it is possible to come down with some type of agreement with the provinces which will have the effect of a penetration of the provisions and principles outlined in this legislation to all people, whether they are under provincial jurisdiction or otherwise.

The potential of this bill for government intervention into the activities of every man, woman and child in our country is, as I have stated, very great. I say this having regard to the background of the growth of substantial intervention by the government in the affairs of its citizens which has taken place so rapidly over the past few years. The legislation before us is rather typical of the kind of legislation we see presented by governments these days, under which some wide-ranging, general principles are stated in the bill with rule-making, enforcement and administration of the legislation being left to order in council.

To summarize this bill in very brief form, the government asks for the right to fight inflation, and concurrently asks for the right to legislate by order in council in respect of areas and matters which the government—I underline the word "government"—deems appropriate for this purpose. We have a tendency these days to accept this kind of legislation, not only in respect of items of minor consequence but in areas of general application across our country. The argument, on the one hand, is that in these modern, complex and difficult times governments must rely more and more on the delegation of power to administrative tribunals and bodies, but at the same time we are involved in an era of participatory democracy under which, apparently, the will of the people will be clearly enunciated in parliamentary terms.

The problem with this tendency which we have experienced, that of government by regulation, is that it appears to be irreversible and—most tragically, in my view—it runs in direct contradiction to the concept of individual rights and meaningful participatory democracy by the average citizen, through parliament. Therefore, when we have legislation such as the bill before us, involving as it does the potential for such long-term, arbitrary regulation and control essentially through an administrative tribunal, one wonders whether when the people of Canada collectively raise their heads to question government control they will discover that the road back to meaningful control by the people over the government will be most difficult if not impossible.

● (1530)

This government, in my view, is not inclined to take stock of its approach to government by delegation. I have the distinct impression that it finds this method of operation convenient and easy. The government appears to

[Mr. Hnatyshyn.]

adopt the attitude that it is politically expedient to neutralize major problems by establishing an administrative body and turning the problem over to that body for solution. The political result of such action is to dissipate pressure on the government to take difficult and meaningful legislative action to deal with the problems of our day. As Members of Parliament, we have often heard our constituents who seek redress of administrative decisions make statements of utter exasperation when it becomes clear to them that their rights are governed by arbitrary, bureaucratic decision with no right of appeal.

By this legislation, this government is therefore introducing its most massive delegation of authority for what I consider to be a prolonged and unnecessary period of time. If there was ever a situation where there should be the right of parliament to review a program or specific legislation, this is the time. As I have stated, this legislation represents the type of philosophic approach that the government takes to any problem. The legislation seems to be the sum and substance of the government's meaningful intentions, and it seems to me that there are serious omissions in the over-all program.

While we are now getting details of the negative side of the government's policy consisting of controls on wages and prices for an undue period of time, there is the absence of any statement by the government as to the positive fiscal and monetary policies it will be adopting immediately and over the long term, which in my view are the really important parts of any meaningful attack on inflation.

What are the monetary policies of this government, and are they to be clearly stated and put into effect? What priority of spending will be proposed so that parliament can assess how much money will be available to various sectors of the economy? What projects will be given priority, and what projects will be removed or relegated to a secondary priority? What clear statement have we had with respect to the government's policy concerning interest rates, government bond issues and regulations governing banking?

Fiscally, do we have any idea at all what the government has in mind in the field of taxation to deal with its attack on the inflationary problem? What has been said by the government to give anyone any confidence with respect to meaningful efficiencies and reductions in government spending? The proposals on prices and income control put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) in the last election were only a small part of the total program announced to increase productivity, restore economic responsibility in government and fight inflation. This part of the program was, hon. as members will recall, strongly criticized by the Prime Minister and the Liberal party even though the proposed controls would be put in place for only a minimal period of time, primarily to attempt to break the inflationary psychology we are experiencing in Canada.

Leadership is sorely needed in this country with respect to our economic situation. I feel that we in the opposition have the responsibility to stand up against inequity in the program, to obtain reasonable fiscal and monetary policies from the government, and to bring unrelenting pressure on the government to re-examine fundamentally its own