

*Price Stability*

on and talk about the way in which Eatons and Simpsons have increased credit charges, and so on. This is why the labour movement, the economists, the New Democratic Party, reject the work of the Prices and Incomes Commission. The commission's investigations are held in secret. There is no opportunity for the workers in the industry or for the consumers affected to look at the books and examine the submissions made to the commission.

Incidentally, submissions are called for only after price increases have been announced and are put into effect. The review procedures established by the commission are heavily biased in favour of industry and commercial groups.

An officer of the industry concerned is seconded to the commission to perform the analysis. In other words, it is like saying to a robber, "Please come in and look at the books and tell us if you are taking money out of the till." Could anything be more ludicrous?

Finally, the reports of the commission do not contain any detailed documentation to enable them to be analysed. As hon. members know, the commission conducted a survey into the price increases related to tinplate. The report showed that companies can raise their prices and still abide by the letter of the price restraint formula to which they agreed and of which the government and the commission are so proud; they can still make the price increases they have in mind, increases which the commission says are inflationary. Yet nothing can be done.

The minister says he does not understand what we in this party propose. I intend to spell out in clear terms what our policy is, and even this minister will be able to understand provided he has the grade 3 education about which the hon. member for North York (Mr. Danson) spoke earlier today. We call for the disbanding of the Prices and Incomes Commission. We propose its replacement by one which would control the price of key commodities, commodities of basic importance to the Canadian people, while placing restraint on all forms of income, not just on wages as seems to be the main objective of the present chairman of the Prices and Incomes Commission.

To achieve equitable distribution of income and to ensure that sacrifices, if necessary, will be made by all levels of society, not just by the poor, we propose a comprehensive incomes policy which would cover all forms of income, that is, it would include profits,

rents, interest, professional fees and unincorporated business incomes. If this policy were followed, the government would not be experiencing its present difficulty in securing the support of organized labour. The Prime Minister and the minister have been critical of organized labour because in its submission this year it was not practical; it was negative, it only criticized.

It is not for me to defend organized labour; I am certainly not an official spokesman for them. But I believe it is important to look at the submissions of the Canadian Labour Congress in 1968 and 1969. I am sure one would find in those submissions proposals for an incomes policy. In other words, the Congress of Labour was saying that if the government would place some restraint on other forms of income, they, the congress, would be prepared to support the application of restraint to wage increases affecting organized workers. I imagine they got tired. They found that the government was not interested, that it was not prepared to put the squeeze on those whose salaries were rising rapidly, or on the businessmen who were making more money every year and who are permitted to charge off all sorts of extras, when making up their income tax returns, which working men are not in a position to include. The congress saw that the government was not prepared to put some restraint on the earnings of the professional people I have mentioned. The government is only interested in putting restraint on workers' wages, and this being the case the CLC is not endorsing the incomes policy. A comprehensive incomes policy such as we propose must include the provision of a guaranteed income to avoid injustice and hardship. It must take account of the plight of low-paid workers, disparities between classes of employees and increases in the cost of living.

• (4:40 p.m.)

Let me approach the conclusion of my remarks by telling the minister that if he wants to know what we in the New Democratic Party think should be done specifically to meet the problems of the 1970s, I would refer him to the minority report prepared by members of the New Democratic Party on the Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs Committee when it dealt with the subject of interest rates. I should like very briefly to put on the record some of the measures they proposed:

1. We should immediately compensate the victims of inflation by ensuring that welfare benefits rise at least as fast as the cost of living index: