

*Anti-Inflation Act*

and he even hoped that he would not be affected at all by that decision. Of course, during the first weeks and months after the announcement of that decision, when control measures were applied, nobody was happy. The workers were concerned but so was the business community. Nobody knew exactly what would be the terms of the controls. Nobody knew what would be the details for every category. Nobody knew how wages and salaries would be controlled in detail. We did not know how profits and prices would be controlled. On the other hand, we all recognized that controlling wages would be relatively easy, but we all admitted that controlling prices and profits in the business sector was much more complex and much more difficult. We, in the government, knew this before making our decision. This is why our decision was hard to make, but we knew that we had to make it. This is why during the last twenty months, we have witnessed a gradual increasing of the support for the government and for these measures.

After two or three months, polls were taken about the degree of support and satisfaction of Canadians concerning this decision of the government. We were not popular. Indeed the degree of support was not very high throughout the Canadian nation, but today when the opposition asks us to eliminate controls abruptly, quickly and suddenly, the polls tell us that more than 60 per cent of Canadians support the controls, and not only support them, but ask us to maintain them because they are aware that they have contributed to bringing back some good sense, some logic, some order in the economy, because they have contributed to reducing what we can call the excessive expectations that some had these last few years.

We said that we were not happy to implement the control program. We said in October 1975 that these controls would be applied for a maximum of three years. We said recently that we are ready to see, in consultation with the affluent economic groups of our society, how we could put an end logically and in an orderly manner to these controls over Canadian economy. This is what we have been doing for several months. And the opposition is well aware that during these last few months, we have conducted a series of intensive consultations with the private sector, the financial groups, the workers, their representatives, in other words, all the important sectors of our economy. We have sat down, we have discussed with them what would eventually be an ideal formula, the one best suited to bring us to a situation where there would no longer be any controls. We do not want controls, but being realistic, we know very well that there is still a need for certain controls in the Canadian economy.

● (2040)

[English]

Last week I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to travel through this country. For some months I have been pushing aside the kind of commitments I was asked to undertake. I was forced to delay trips in the Atlantic area and in the western provinces. I am a Quebecer and a minister in the Canadian House of Commons, and I knew it would help me a

[Mr. Lessard.]

lot if I were exposed to my fellow Canadians in all parts of the country. I knew very well that sitting here is not the best place—it is a good place, but it is obviously not the best place—to assess the mood of the people, what they need and what they want. Of course I admit we need to debate to some extent.

While I was in Cape Breton I did some checking on Devco's activities. I must tell my colleague over there that I travelled through his riding. I was forced to do so because of bad weather; I could not land where I was supposed to, so I had to drive through his riding. I drove through Pictou, and that area is just wonderful. I must say that the kind of reports that we get in this place, the kind of description we have from our colleagues in the opposition, would tend to paint a certain picture. I admit there are difficulties, but the picture is much more beautiful than some people in this House tend to depict. They still have difficulties. We all have difficulties, no matter where we live.

I had the chance to travel last week and the week before in P.E.I., Nova Scotia, and Cape Breton. I have been to Halifax before, and I know my hon. friend will agree with me that Halifax is not Nova Scotia, any more than Paris is France, or Quebec or Montreal is the whole of the province of Quebec. When I was in Cape Breton a few days ago I stayed for 24 hours in a private house and had dinner with a fine family. I slept at the house and breakfasted with this family and talked with them for 12 hours, so I can report to the House that what these members here are saying is not at all the truth. They cut those parts that do not suit their purpose.

I know we have much more support for our policies, which is why tonight I am able to stand in this place and tell my colleagues across the way and my hon. friends on this side—I make that distinction—that things are not exactly what hon. members opposite say.

I was going to fly to the Northern Territories and travel around during the next few days—

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Whose jet did you use?

**Mr. Lessard:** I took a commercial plane and I flew by government plane too. How can you get up there otherwise? There is no way. It is a long road if you want to walk. Obviously I have to respond to those guys over there, Mr. Speaker, and that is what I am doing tonight.

These people who are asking to put an end to the controls on the economy of this country do not represent Canadians at all, absolutely not. Two days ago I met with a group of people in northern B.C. and they told me that we were right. In the Vancouver *Sun* of Friday there was an editorial which was asking the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) why the hell—

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Order.

**Mr. Lessard:**—he was calling for a three day debate to put an end to controls when he had nothing to suggest except something which was very close to the kind of controls we are