

Emergency Powers Act

demanding price control at this time. The article is headed "Farmers approve of Price Controls", and has this to say:

That Canada should have price control of all essential commodities during the current international crisis, was the opinion expressed by 84 per cent of the farm forum groups in a recent national farm radio forum poll.

Here is the question that the farm forums were asked to discuss:

It has been suggested that in the current international crisis, we should have price control of all essential commodities. What do you think?

Here are the percentages of replies for and against, from the 1,033 farm forum listening groups: For price control, 84 per cent; opposed to price control, 8 per cent; uncertain or divided in opinion, 4 per cent; no answer, 4 per cent.

Here, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion is a consensus amongst farmers in Canada from one end of the country to the other which clearly demonstrates that farmers, by a majority of more than ten to one, are supporting price controls at this time. We know the people in urban areas, people on fixed incomes, and industrial workers are demanding price control. I believe that, in conjunction with the labour unions, to those groups in our nation on fixed incomes—such as old age pensioners, persons living on a mother's allowance, et cetera—must be added the great mass of Canadian farmers who also are demanding price control. The fact is that the whole Canadian nation is calling on the government to implement price control. In a democracy such as we have, Mr. Speaker, at this time of crisis, I believe this government would be doing the responsible thing if it brought in price controls immediately and thus protect the living standards of all Canadians.

Mr. Donald M. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Speaker, I had not assumed that there would be another debate on the subject of price control today. I should just like to offer briefly some views on this subject, in view of the further attention it has received today and also in view of the courses of action which, in some of the speeches today, the government has been invited to take.

I yield to no member of this house in my alarm over the threatening dangers of inflation. I do not think that inflation is something off in the distance. It is a condition that we have right now. The people from one end of this country to the other are feeling the distressing effects of it. I am far from thinking that that cycle of inflation has run its course.

When I spoke in the house on February 20 I made it clear that I am certainly not one of those who believe that there are no

measures that lie within the power of the government to take in order to meet the dangers of inflation. I think that there are many steps that the government can take to meet this overwhelming danger of inflation.

I wish to make an observation directly related to this emergency powers bill. Even if the government took the steps that it is being invited to take under this bill, I do not think that those steps would be nearly as effective in meeting the common danger of inflation and the soaring cost of living as measures that the government can take quite apart from this bill and could have taken before this bill was ever introduced into this house.

I have mentioned some of those steps before. There is the failure of the government to exercise the powers that it possesses under the Bank of Canada Act to control credit; and when you have regard to the tremendous increase in loans in this country as a result of too-free credit, I think this is some yardstick with which to measure the extent to which inflation has been allowed to increase, by leaps and bounds, while the government has sat back and has not taken steps in that direction which were open to it to take under powers that it already possessed and has possessed for many years.

The second failure of the government, of course, is not only the way in which it has refrained from any contraction of the money supply in this country, but the way in which it has actually increased the money supply at a time when inflation was leaping ahead at a rate more rapid than ever before in our history. Also there are various other measures to which I referred when I spoke on February 20, Mr. Speaker, which are within the power of this government to take directly to counter the influence of inflationary factors at work in our economy today, which they do not need this present bill to take, and never have needed the powers under it to meet that very great danger.

Essentially, of course, the problem of inflation will have to be battled on many fronts. There will have to be an increase in production, because that will create more goods to meet the demands; and there will have to be, whether we like it or not—especially moving nearer now when more and more of the resources of this country must be directed to preparation for defence—a measure of consumer restraint, which will call for the exercise of a sense of personal responsibility on the part of every citizen in this country. That is one direction in which I think the government has been