

Price Stability

that things were not good in Canada and that we could expect increased unemployment and economic problems all over the nation. We did not create that situation; we inherited it.

In 1957 the policies introduced by the Conservative government got the show back on the road, and by 1963 things were booming. The people of Canada, however, decided they wanted another government. Another government was elected and, as I say, that government is playing with the highest cost of living, the highest interest rates and the greatest unemployment we have had in many years. One of these days there will be a day of reckoning. This proliferation of committees, commissions and reports will prove to be ineffective.

There are some outstanding people serving on the Prices and Incomes Commission. In fact they appeared before the committee last evening and we discussed some of the areas in which they are making studies. Here we are talking about setting up another committee. I wonder whether the minister is aware how difficult it has been to carry on committee work in the past few weeks. In fact, last night when the committee was examining the work of this great commission on prices and incomes there was not a member of the government present, aside from the chairman. When the chairman had a call of nature and had to go out, we had to appoint one of our members as acting chairman. This is an indication of the interest government members have in the work of such a committee.

Someone said he had great respect for the committees of this House. This is one area in which I think Parliament has failed in the past few years. We all remember the days when the estimates were considered in this House, where they were given a thorough study. It is true, as people say, that on the last day or so of a session estimates representing millions of dollars were pushed through. But this happened in the House and every member had an opportunity to participate in the consideration of the estimates. Now, if a member who is interested in the estimates of a particular department should happen to be tied up in another committee he does not have an opportunity to participate in the examination of those estimates. So I believe this government's organization has failed. I believe that in a new Parliament something will have to be done to review the rules so that we can bring back to the House of Commons some of those matters which have been delegated to committees. I do not

think some things are receiving a proper examination under the present procedure.

Yesterday morning a committee was studying the estimates of the Department of Supply and Services which supplies goods for the government and this Parliament in the amount of \$850 million. How many members were present to consider that matter? There were 7 people present to examine the expenditures of a government department that spends that very great amount of money. Yet the minister has the temerity to stand up and say he has great faith in the committee system. How can such an organization possibly be examined in one hour and a half on one day in one year? It is just not possible to carry out the required examination.

So we come to the matter of this particular committee which is to be set up, a committee which is supposed to study the reports of a commission comprising 70 experts and economists who should be able to do the study themselves. We are supposed to study them. This motion suggests that a special joint committee of Parliament be set up to study the reports of the Prices and Incomes Commission and to report back to Parliament its observations and opinions thereon. In other words, it is to be a committee to report from time to time upon a series of reports, because the terms of reference of the commission do not expire until December 31.

I note that one subject being examined by the commission on prices and incomes is railway freight rate increases. The wording is, "A review is under way on railway freight rates increases". If we go back to the time when the Canadian Transport Commission was established, a great show was made by that commission in respect of taking all subsidies away from the railway. They were going to make the railways self-supporting. What happened? As soon as the subsidies were taken away, what happened to the people of Canada? They found they had to pay higher freight rates for everything they bought.

In this day and age we depend a great deal on the transportation of products from one end of the country to the other and from one part of the world to another. Freight rates represent a tremendous part of the cost of all goods which people buy and a great many of the services they use. So I maintain that the Prices and Incomes people should not be examining this matter; the government should go to the railways and the Canadian Transport Commission and have the freight rate subsidies reinstated.