

Finance

• (2:50 p.m.)

The minister claims that the government must now establish a yardstick against which to measure wage increases. You know, this being converted to the idea that wages must be somehow related to some productivity, is even later than Saul going to Damascus. This particular administration has a responsibility too. It cannot divorce itself from the actions of its predecessor administration which took us through the settlement in respect of the dock workers in Montreal and the seaway workers. These 30 per cent and 35 per cent wage settlements of course set the pattern. Frankly, I would suggest one would think that the workers in other industries had completely lost any sense of proportion if they did not go along with the same sort of settlement encouraged three, four or five years ago by the government.

The government says it intends to break the back of inflation but, strangely enough in our position, we find that inflation is international. We import inflation or at least it is influenced by other countries. In part in many instances inflation does come to us to the extent that we buy goods from countries where there is inflation. We have responsibility too. The hon. member who wanted to make a quip from his seat rather than from his head might look at the consequences of releasing the dollar.

The minister says that imports will come in in greater quantity and that therefore prices will be reduced. It is all very well to hope that this will be the result provided there is no inflation elsewhere, but if the countries with which we deal in such great quantities do not have any control over their inflation we will only be bringing it into this country. Particularly there is the comparison of prices. There is always, shall we say, the long-range goal of parity in respect of wages with the United States. If there should be high or severe inflation in the United States we will feel that push too. It all boils down, however, to unemployment at the end of the road in the decline of Canadian industry. This is where the problem lies. If we are to fight inflation by releasing the dollar and getting imports which crowd out Canadian production, of course there will be unemployment. And so we fight the fight.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Edmonton West I am sure will not mind my reminding him of the provisions of the Standing Order. I always hesitate to interrupt an hon. member when he is com-

menting on a ministerial statement, particularly on such an important matter. There is, however, a Standing Order which provides that comments by spokesmen on behalf of opposition parties should be brief. I am taking into account the importance of the matter and the interesting comments of the hon. member, but I would ask him to keep in mind the limitations imposed by the Standing Order.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I was endeavouring to reply to an eight-page statement which raises important points. I trust that the importance of the subject will not be detracted from perhaps rather lengthy remarks. If the remarks hurt hon. members opposite, that is fine; they must bear with them. In any event, the burden is being placed on the backs of the workers of this country.

The budgetary proposals made by the minister, the accelerated payments, presumably will help the provinces. This is a once-in-a-lifetime measure. It is not a measure which can be re-used. He cannot go on accelerating things which he has not got. I hope this will help some of the provinces, but I repeat that it is not a long-term solution but is rather a stop-gap solution at the very best.

Mr. Max Saltzman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, on page 4 of the minister's statement he says:

I acknowledged that it would be unrealistic to expect such guidelines would attract support from any substantial segment of organized labour.

By these words the minister condemns his own policy. How does the minister propose to carry this policy into effect? Does he intend to do so at the point of a bayonet? Does he think he can make a labour force work when that labour force feels it is unfairly discriminated against and feels that the measures he has brought in are unjust? Surely the minister must realize that unless he has the co-operation of labour and that unless labour feels that the policies brought in affect not only them but other segments of the economy his policies cannot be made to work in a free society.

It is not necessary for me to remind the minister that we often give up one freedom in return for greater freedoms. We accept certain actions in the interest of society but we do this only when we think we are being called upon to make our contribution while other people are making their contribution as well. But when the minister brings in guidelines which apply to labour alone and points his finger at labour as the villain in the whole