

*Anti-Inflation Act*

bers of the NDP think highly of the Premier of Manitoba on some issues, they have been crawling all over trying to hide from the fact that he took the position he did on the issue of price and income controls. At least he is one member of the NDP who did not try to foster the idea that he alone was a friend of labour and that nobody else was.

As I say, 1974 is history. Today, roughly 15 months later, we are witnessing a 180 degree turn in government policy, and members on the government side are strangely silent. I believe that people can change their minds. After being apprized of new conditions, people can change their minds, and that is fair. But to this day, even though he is trying to put a prices and incomes policy in place, the Prime Minister has lacked the decency to get up and acknowledge that many of the things he said in 1974 were for short-term political party purposes only. He has not had the integrity to say to the Canadian people, "The government is largely responsible for the present rate of inflation. We must get together to improve the situation. We were wrong as a government, and now we must reverse our position."

Instead, he wishes to claim that the government is always right; that the government always knows best. Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough. Canadians today are angry and they are confused. They are angry with the government for not telling them the truth, and they are confused because they see the government embracing a prices and incomes policy when only 15 months ago it said such a policy would not work.

What are Canadians supposed to believe next? It is the role of government to lead, but in order to lead it is necessary to gain respect. I put this question to members opposite: What are Canadians to believe, when they find the government asking them to accept a policy which only 15 months ago it completely rejected? Are they to believe that the government is willing, finally, to take action of a kind it sincerely believes is for the good of the nation, or are they supposed to retain the cynicisms many of them have acquired and say it is just another Liberal ploy to reduce the pressure and produce political gains? This is a serious question, and it is one which affects not only members of the government but every elected representative in Canada.

For too long Canadians, as a result of experience, have been saying that what politicians promise during elections and what they do afterward are entirely different things. The Prime Minister's performance on economic matters is one of the principle obstacles upon which Canadians stumble. It is this which has made them so confused.

What has been the government's response to the situation today? It has presented Bill C-73, a far reaching measure and one which I personally would like to support because I feel it is indeed necessary to exert control over the economy. But I simply cannot trust the Prime Minister with the powers this legislation would give him. I simply do not respect him sufficiently to assume he will exercise integrity, a quality which to my mind has been sadly deficient. I believe many Canadians today believe in their heart of hearts that the right hon. gentleman was less than honest in his presentation back in June of 1974.

I want to make this point clear: in the hands of a leader with integrity, the bill could be effective. What has hap-

pened? In the white paper that the government brought forward it was clearly stated that food and fish products would be exempted from the guidelines. No sooner was the white paper handed to us than the crew of expatriate Liberals who have become heads of the Anti-Inflation Board appeared on television. I do not know whether we should call them the "Jean and Beryl show", but unfortunately they are guaranteed a much longer run than most poor television shows have the right to run. I am afraid that this particular show will be going on for at least three years.

● (1750)

One of the first things that they said would be examined was marketing boards. When I was back home last weekend the farmers were asking me, what are we to believe? On one hand the farmers know they will be affected by these controls, yet it was clearly stated in print that food products would be exempt from controls. Nevertheless, the two principal members of the board have stated that one of the first things that will be examined is marketing boards.

I should like to read into the record part of an article that appeared in today's *Ottawa Journal* in which the Canadian Federation of Agriculture took on some of the statements that the chairman of the Anti-Inflation Board has made respecting marketing boards. Mr. Gordon Hill, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, is quoted at length. He feels already that the chairman of the board has been influenced by the bias that his vice-chairman, Beryl Plumtre, has against farmers and their products and the position that they have in Canadian life. In the article, Mr. Hill is quoted as follows:

Farmers received 10 cents or 12 per cent of the 84-cents retail price for cottage cheese this year. They received between 8.3 and 12 per cent of the retail price of processed fruit, pears, peaches and prunes; 30 cents or 55 per cent of the price of retail milk; between 3.2 and 12 per cent of the cost of processed vegetables, peas, tomatoes, corn and carrots.

They received about 74 per cent of the retail price of eggs last January, and 76 per cent of the retail price of top-grade steers.

Those are not my figures, Mr. Speaker; they are the figures of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture which today, along with many farmers across the country, is deeply concerned whether we can believe what the Prime Minister says. Further, Mr. Hill is reported as saying that farmers have had to face baler twine prices that went up by 400 per cent between 1972 and 1974, and ammonium nitrate fertilizer price increases of 152 per cent from February, 1973, to the same period of 1975. This litany could go on and on, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, once again I ask whether we can believe what the government says about agricultural products.

With regard to CEMA, all of us in the House know that the board has had serious difficulties. I do not want to get involved today in a philosophical argument as to whether marketing boards are good or bad, but I do want to point out to hon. members on both sides of the House that the farmers have the right to get together as processors and to organize, if they feel that this is the best way to protect their interests, every bit as much as any other group in society.