

*Anti-Inflation Act*

**Time for deciding questions** (7) All questions in connection with any motion taken up and considered by the House of Commons pursuant to subsection (6) shall be debated without interruption and decided not later than the end of the third sitting day next after the day the motion is first so taken up and considered."

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, when the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) briefed opposition party leaders about the anti-inflation program on the evening of October 13, I expressed my concern about the duration of the program that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance said they were bringing in. That was not, of course, the place to present a detailed argument or even specific proposals, but I did express my concern as an initial reaction when I was first told about the program. Later in the evening when I was invited to make a public comment, it was the duration of the program to which I principally devoted my attention and expressed my concerns. The following day, October 14, when the government presented its white paper for discussion in the House, I dealt with these concerns at some length, as recorded at page 8199 of *Hansard*. At that time no bill had been presented. We were discussing the white paper before presentation of the bill and therefore we did not know precisely what the bill would contain.

During discussion of the white paper on October 14, I said we supported the general intentions of the white paper. I also said that further support for the actions of the government would be a matter of judgment based on the government's response to our concerns and observations. In the meantime, having expressed our concerns about the program we said we would wait to see the bill. Bill C-73 was presented for first reading on October 16. On Friday, October 17, debate on second reading commenced and my party's House leader, the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), led off our participation in the second reading debate.

Again he dealt with the duration of the government's program as well as the duration of the bill. The hon. member for Peace River put the argument in very strong terms. He did so because, having then seen the bill, we realized that we were not just dealing with a longer term program than we felt proper, but that we were in fact dealing with an open-ended program. It was clear from the bill that the government was not limiting itself to 3¼ years, but was setting up a mechanism that would enable it to extend the bill almost indefinitely, or certainly for a substantial period of time, simply by presenting to the House and having carried after very limited debate a resolution extending the term of the bill. So in that sense, as I say, we discovered that the term of the bill was virtually open-ended.

In this regard, the hon. member for Peace River, as recorded at page 8314 of *Hansard*, said:  
—this aspect is totally unacceptable—

● (1610)

The hon. member for Peace River served notice that we would present an amendment at the appropriate stage of

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

the committee hearings and later to deal with this concern. I ask members of the House to bear in mind just how easy it would be for a government to extend the length of this program by a simple resolution. My remarks of the same nature, expressing concern about the duration of the bill, were subsequently carried on network radio and television. I stressed that while we in the official opposition continued to support the necessity for a program to deal with inflation and to break the inflationary situation which exists, we simply could not support on third and final reading a bill incorporating the time-frame the government proposes.

I ask members of the House to bear in mind that the government's wage and price control program and Bill C-73 are not the same thing. Bill C-73 does not define or describe even the government's wage and price control program. It does not set out a wage and price control program. Bill C-73 simply delegates sweeping powers to the government, the administrator and the Anti-Inflation Board. The government itself, through the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and other ministers have outlined in the House and to the people of Canada in a somewhat uncertain way, perhaps, a price and wage control program. But with the powers in this bill, if it becomes an act of parliament, the governor in council can change that whole wage and price control program any time they choose to do so.

They are seeking these powers for a period of 3¼ years, plus. Spokesmen for the government say they hope to terminate the program before 3¼ years run out. They may or may not terminate this particular program which they put before the people. They may terminate the program, but even if they terminate it they will keep the enormous powers they are asking to have delegated to them through this bill. We are not being asked to consider in the House, and we certainly are not being asked to vote upon, a specific price and wage control program. We are being asked to vote upon a bill which would give the government enormous delegated powers for a period of 3¼ or more, years. If one needs an example, the history of the Defence Production Act shows how loth governments are to give up powers that have been granted to them.

It is important to distinguish between a wage and price control program such as has been outlined by the government, such as it is, on one hand, and the bill before us because they are not the same. We are not being asked to vote into effect a wage and price control program for a period of six months, a year, a year and a half, three years, 3¼ years, or longer; we are being asked to give the government the authority to write its own wage and price control program, an anti-inflationary program, or to exercise these powers in any way it may see fit. If the bill should pass, there is nothing to prevent this government changing the program beyond recognition without any further reference back to this parliament. That in itself is sufficient reason for limiting the life of this bill to a period not in excess of 18 months.

The last time prior I spoke in the House on the duration or life of this bill was during the debate on the NDP supply motion of November 14. I shall read some of the comments I made at that time to remind the minister and members opposite that I am not raising these objections this after-