

*Price Stability*

The editorial then goes on to discuss in some detail the rather extraordinary questionnaire circulated in the United States seeking the views of people in that country to this and related questions, which to me indicated the most alarming movement, if the response to the questionnaire is correct, toward strong, authoritarian, dictatorial government at the expense of the public and its representatives, that is, the Congress in the United States and Parliament in Canada. That goes right to the root of the issue here.

Why have a joint committee if it is not to have any real function, if it cannot act effectively, strongly and diligently, and whenever required have the requisite degree of flexibility to direct its attention to all the issues surrounding inflation? I am not going to take the time now to attack the Prices and Incomes Commission and what it has done. I haven't much faith in what it has done or what it is going to do. I think it is simply a matter of the government having established a lightning conductor to steer away from the government some of the wrath and rage of people who have been hurt, who have been damaged and who have been injured by continuing inflation and by the way in which the government is dealing with it by calling upon the unemployed, the oppressed, the disinherited, and the poverty-stricken farmers to bear the full brunt of this war against inflation.

● (5:20 p.m.)

I will deal with that later. I want to direct my attention to this question: What is the value of setting up a committee of this kind? In view of the very rigid position the government has taken, as illustrated by the objection to the amendment moved by my colleague, I can think of very little that can be effectively done by the committee. The government is growing stronger and more powerful, as both speakers who preceded me pointed out. The establishment of task forces of specialists and the tremendous building up of the monolithic apparatus of the Prime Minister's office and of the Privy Council give me cause for concern.

We in this House could have in our hands a very effective and useful means of attacking this trend. I do not suggest that some commissions are not essential. Governments must be strong, powerful and flexible if they are to move rapidly in dealing with emergencies and situations of a crisis character which, in the kind of world we live in today, will be more and more evident. Although I do not like these powers in the hands of government, I

[Mr. Baldwin.]

feel that we will have to live with them. Yet why, in the name of heaven, must this Parliament every day pass over to the government extensive powers? I will not go back over the debates of the last two or three days, but what has been happening illustrates the extent to which this House is being asked, in breach of its plain duty and responsibility to the people of Canada, to give to those who sit on the treasury benches power to deal with the lives, property, freedom and economic rights of the people of Canada.

Last September the report of the Committee on Statutory Instruments was brought before the House. Had that report been implemented even partially I should have experienced less difficulty in accepting what has been happening. The report of the Special Committee on Statutory Instruments—it was a very carefully drawn up, well documented, unanimous report by members from all sides of the House—pointed out the grave dangers which are evident in the operation of certain tribunals, ministerial task forces, Crown corporations and those emanations of government which have seized and are now exercising greater power.

The report of the special committee illustrated ways and means by which we might deal with that matter. It was brought in with loud hosannas. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) and the chairman of the committee told us that at long last Canada, which had been delinquent in this field, would have some means of dealing with the excessive powers of government.

We were approaching the tag-end of the session. I have on several occasions asked the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) and the Prime Minister, in the House and outside, what the government intended to do about this report and whether it intended to implement all or any part of it. I venture to say that the government will make no attempt to implement any part of this report. There will be no means by which members of the House will have any measure of freedom in telling their constituents—and they should have this right—and the people of Canada what are the proposals of the Prices and Incomes Commission. I mention that body in order to bring myself within the relevant terms of this motion.

How, then, can we stand idly by and listen to the minister in a glib and devious way attempting to suggest that what the government is attempting to do here will be very nice for the people of Canada? Until there is