

Adjournment Debate

The NCI will be done away with in the same way. Its term expires in 1980, just over a year from now. Will the government appoint another commission on inflation then? I am happy to say it will not because the government will be a Progressive Conservative one, and—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Mr. Alan Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in initially responding to the comments of the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Hare) regarding the next election let me just say that he should keep a close watch over his own shoulder as the people of St. Boniface rush to restore membership in this House to the Liberal stronghold where it so traditionally belongs.

The hon. member asked what action will be taken to follow up on CSIP's findings in a number of areas. He specifically mentioned CSIP's public statements with regard to food industry profits, dairy industry costs, and CSIP's criticism of the wage settlement with the letter carriers.

In reply I would like to note that the government has replaced CSIP with the National Commission on Inflation in order to monitor prices and incomes more effectively. The NCI will be better able to monitor because it will have powers under the Inquiries Act to require the submission of information.

CSIP had requested the voluntary submission of information from 190 of the largest companies and some of them had expressed their reluctance to co-operate. The government could not give CSIP Inquiries Act powers because such powers were judged to be inconsistent with the mandate of CSIP's parent organization, the Economic Council of Canada. As the new agency responsible for prices and incomes monitoring, the National Commission can be expected to follow up on many CSIP's findings.

Concerning a follow-up on CSIP's comments on food industry profits, I would like to remind the hon. member that Mr. Renouf, the head of the NCI, has already been involved in the question of food industry profits as chairman of the AIB. The AIB has done two studies of food industry profits, the second of which could be seen as a follow-up on the CSIP's comments. The AIB studies have been supported by the more complete information on food industry profits contained in the release of Statistics Canada data on non-financial corporation profits for the first three quarters of 1978. CSIP itself has noted that its

original comment on food industry profits had to be revised in the light of the more complete data. Given Mr. Renouf's involvement to date, I am sure that the NCI will have a continuing interest in the profit performance of the food industry.

As far as other studies that CSIP was undertaking are concerned, final decisions have not been made. Some of them may be taken over by the NCI. The terms of reference of the NCI instruct it "through publication of reports . . . to promote understanding of the inflationary process and its implications for the economy". It will be up to the NCI in consultation with CSIP and the economic council to decide which studies should be continued under NCI's auspices. Some other research studies with a much less immediate relation to monitoring may be continued by the Economic Council itself and could eventually result in council publications. Finally, it is possible that some studies could be discontinued if they do not fit in with the research priorities of NCI and the Economic Council.

● (2230)

The hon. member also asked why the NCI is not directly responsible to parliament, as he suggested CSIP was, and why the NCI is reporting to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) and not to parliament and the people of Canada. I should first remind the hon. member that CSIP was set up under the direction of the Economic Council at the request of the First Ministers' Conference in February, 1978. As such, CSIP reported through the Economic Council to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and not directly to parliament. The NCI will report to the governor in council, with the Minister of Finance providing the liaison between the two.

According to its terms of reference, the NCI has been instructed to report to the public when it deems it appropriate to do so. It is authorized to publish its reports and the results of its studies and investigation under its own authority. The Minister of Finance has no veto power over what it can make public. The NCI is expected to report publicly on many of the cases it examines, and on more general issues as part of its effort to promote public understanding of the inflationary process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret to inform the hon. member that his allotted time has expired.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.31 p.m.