

*Emergency Powers Act*

mind we should provide in the new legislation for a uniform system of rent control from one end of this country to the other. If we do not, what shall we find? We shall find comparisons made by the people in one province as to what has been done in another province. We shall have criticisms by one province of another province. In the matter of these controls, I believe it would be preferable to have them on a uniform basis. Again may I say that when rent control is put into effect, as I believe it should be under federal jurisdiction, it should not be done in the rough and ready way it was done during the war and during the subsequent partial removals. I think that opportunity should be given for revisions on the part both of the tenant and of the landlord, so that justice can be done to both parties to an agreement.

If, under the conditions that prevail, we embark on a measure of control I agree with the leader of the opposition that the more specifically it can be outlined in the legislation which is to be brought before us the better it will be for this house and the country. I have in my hand a copy of the brief to which I referred. I notice that the groups represented include the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, the Canadian Congress of Labour, the Canadian and Catholic Confederation of Labour, the dominion joint legislative committee of the railway transportation brotherhoods. As the Prime Minister pointed out, they represent a large group in Canada. They ask for these four things. They put it this way, and I had better read what they said at page 11 of their brief. Paragraph 25 reads as follows:

25. The labour movement therefore wants four things: (a) Adequate rent control.

They are not requesting that of the provinces but of the federal authority. The paragraph continues:

If rents are allowed to continue to go the way other prices have gone, the already heavy burden of the increased cost of living will become, for hundreds of thousands of families, almost unbearable. They will be able to provide themselves with shelter only at the cost of severe cuts in other parts of their living standards, including food.

(b) Freezing of prices.

(c) A public board to pass on all applications for price and rent increases.

(d) Labour representation on that board. The absence of such representation on the wartime prices and trade board was a serious error, which should not be repeated.

Those are the four main points made. I should like to see an extension of some of them. For example, in (d), I should like to see labour, farm and consumer representation on those boards so that these groups could understand the viewpoints of one another. In that way we might get more

understanding and more unity in the country. These measures are difficult perhaps to work out and to put into effect but I think that the government, under pressure from this parliament and indeed under the pressure of public opinion in this country, must put into effect measures of price control involving the payment of subsidies, in an attempt not only to stabilize but to roll back prices. If you stabilize prices and if you have groups which can discuss the wage levels of the various groups of workers in the country, I am certain that you can come to an agreement. My hon. friend who sits behind me and who has a copy of this brief—as I said, I have not had time to read it—points out that in paragraph 23 of their brief they refer to what I am saying just now. I will read it to the house and in doing so may I say that I shall read it for the first time; I have not read it before. It reads as follows:

The labour movement recognizes that wages could go up fast enough and far enough to break a price ceiling, though it sees no immediate danger of anything of the sort. It believes that the proper way to deal with this question is a government-labour-management conference to work out methods of wage stabilization.

That is what I have been saying for the last year or two, but always having been quoted by the press as being opposed to wage controls. The brief continues:

This offers a prospect of a wage policy which will do two things, both essential: (a) preserve the spirit, the principle, of collective bargaining, and (b) bring the experience of labour and management into the defence effort. If our government institutes a general policy of price and production controls, labour is ready to take part in a joint government-labour-management conference to consider wage stabilization.

There we find an explicit statement of the acceptance by labour of the very policy that we have been urging in this house and indeed across the country. We must of course have wage stabilization if we are going to have effective price controls. No one could believe otherwise. But on the other hand I am not in favour—nor are they, nor I believe is anyone with a semblance of justice in his make-up—of the freezing of wages suddenly so that some wages will be frozen at sub-standard levels, as they would be. I therefore believe that there is substantial unanimity in this country behind the demand we are making for the institution of price controls immediately and the payment of subsidies so that the producers of primary and agricultural products would not be penalized and so that this great burden upon our people would be eased.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize what I firmly believe, and I have said it so often in this house that I hesitate to repeat it. I believe that the best propaganda for the Labour-Progressive party or the communist party is