

elections, that the Prime Minister opposed controls because he was worried about what happens when they come off.

Those who are worried about the timetable set out in the bill and who know that this government has introduced this legislation, must ask themselves when the controls are going to come off if the Prime Minister of Canada says that the program is not effective if the controls come off. In other words, you must consider what he has been saying in the light of events which have occurred since the publication of the interview. The logic of what he is saying is this: the controls program does not work if it ever comes off.

We do not know how long this period of controls will be. We are told that it will last between three and three and a half years. That, in the view of many on my side, is an alarmingly long time. We know it is all too simple for the majority party in this parliament simply, by its own vote, to extend that period, to extend the capacity of this overly powerful centralist government to continue the program of controls for a longer period. That matter will need to be changed at the committee stage.

Of course the *Maclean's* article raises other questions about the long-range planning of the Government of Canada. Perhaps on September 30 there was no intention at all to bring in this kind of program. Perhaps something occurred between September 30, when the *Maclean's* interview was given, and the night when it was felt necessary to influence voters in Hochelaga and Restigouche by going on national television and announcing an emergency program. Perhaps something happened to change the government's mind.

It is singularly curious that on September 30, 13 days before the Prime Minister's announcement and 20 days before today, the Prime Minister was expressing severe reservations about any program of controls. Yet, 13 days later, he introduced those controls. I shall return to this theme later, because I think there is a serious reason to believe that what we have here is a jerry-built program which was put together overnight without adequate consideration of the consequences, distortions, and disruptions it can cause in the Canadian economy.

My point is that a bill which provides this kind of latitude for a government is dangerous in the hands of any sponsor, but particularly dangerous in the hands of a government which has spent its successive mandates in adding powers unto itself and in limiting the power and creative capacity of other sectors of the Canadian economy. It would be useful, particularly in light of the Prime Minister's statements of September 30, to trace the genesis of these measures, of this legislation.

● (2110)

The Prime Minister, in some unusually eloquent language at a press conference announcing his new ministry, made reference to what he called the law and order kick. That was by way of introducing the nature of the measures that he and his government intended to bring before the session of parliament which re-commenced last week. He said, and I quote:

—the rate of growth of the Canadian economy is no longer as great as it used to be and therefore people are realizing that something is changing. And this uncertainty they have translates itself in socially neurotic behavior. ... This will mean government approach to the

Anti-Inflation Act

whole problem of peace and security, by looking at the criminal code, by looking at such things as gun control, capital punishment, the whole works.

My interpretation of what the Prime Minister was doing at that time is that he was caught between two events. On the one hand, he and his colleagues had planned to bring in no economic legislation to the parliament that began meeting again last week. They intended again a mélange of domestic legislation aimed at social problems; gun control and that kind of thing.

Suddenly the former minister of finance resigned. There was an outcry responding to that resignation. It brought focus to the great Canadian anger and concern about economic conditions. The Prime Minister is at least alert enough to recognize an issue when it stares him in the face. He knew that inflation was the issue. His program was prepared to deal with other problems. His solution was, as he said at the press conference, and I confess to putting words in his mouth, to fight inflation with gun controls. That was the plan. It was undone by the resignation of the former minister of finance, which was apparently unexpected. By the emphasis of the response, the Prime Minister knew the public was angered about inflation.

I do not believe the reason this legislation was brought in was because there has been a profound change in the recognition by the Government of Canada of the seriousness of our economic matters. Instead, I think it was brought in because it had suddenly become an issue at a time when a divisive issue was dangerous to the government.

The most effective and prominent English Canadian minister of the government walked out for reasons he still has not been frank enough to tell us. He had nonetheless quit. He raised concern about the economic situation in Canada. The Prime Minister knew the Liberal party would have a convention later this fall which involves a mechanism for a leadership review. What he did was whomp up an economic program, not designed to meet the economic needs of the country, but to meet the immediate pressing political requirements of the Liberal party.

If I am correct and what we are dealing with tonight and in the days to come is a jerry-built program, a program thrown together at the last minute for reasons generally unrelated to the economic problems of the country, we are in a very serious situation.

This program was thrown together so quickly that the government did not even have time to find a third commissioner. If there had been any planning, surely it would have been able to find the third wheel of the troika.

An hon. Member: They didn't find the second.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): My colleague suggests they did not find the second. There was some question as to whether they are sure they have found any. Clearly they were so rushed in their planning that they were not even able to find a third person prepared to sit on a board with Mrs. Plumtre and Mr. Pepin. Perhaps that is understandable. It is at least remarkable. It is an indication of the rush with which they proceeded on this front.

It is probably inappropriate to suggest that the results in Hochelaga have left the government with a gentleman to whom a certain debt is owed, a man who has had some