

*Anti-Inflation Act*

and different from what was advanced by this party during the election campaign of 1974 and before.

I refer to the proposals advanced by my leader and supported by members of this party which constituted, in fact, a workable package and lacked the monstrous qualities contained in the program the government has brought forward. The minister's admission is now on the record, and it is quite clear that what, in fact, is contained within the four corners of the bill and of the guidelines is not the package which was proposed by our party.

Before leaving the speech made by the minister, I want to say, again, how genuinely sorry I am that he made no real effort to deal with the bill and to explain its provisions. It is an exceedingly difficult set of proposals which the government is bringing forward. The proposals are full of enigmas, confusion, ambiguities, puzzles, doubts and uncertainties.

At times we in this House become too introspective, but outside the four walls of this chamber there are thousands of people who have important decisions to make involving the economy of this country and the well-being and social and economic future of millions of Canadians who are anxious to know what is involved. I did not expect the minister to have at his fingertips at this time all the answers not only to the questions which have been asked by hon. members in this House but those which are being asked by people all over this country. However, in his second reading speech in which he set out to seek approval in principle of this type of measure, I think it was reasonable to believe he would come before this House prepared and equipped with knowledge and information to provide at least some of the answers. This he has not done. I do not know whether the minister has not done this because there is not complete agreement among members of the government. If so, that is a tragedy. It may be because the minister himself is not too certain of the facts, the law and the economics involved. I do not know.

When I look at the number of clauses and the draftsmanship in respect of the clauses, I have every reason to believe this bill has been around the Privy Council for some time. If that were the case, and if the minister and the Prime Minister believed in the bill and the program, the minister would have come here with a speech of some length—and I would have been prepared to listen to it—in which he would have dealt in depth and in detail with the problems which face this country in respect of our inflationary condition, the problems which this bill poses and the problems to which the bill supposedly offers solutions. I am particularly sorry this has not been done. I hope the minister, when he closes the debate, will rectify this mistake. I hope he will do something to answer the questions which are being asked by people all over this land.

I propose to deal in a brief way with some of the issues consistent with this being a proposal for approval at second reading and reference to a committee. I shall raise, from time to time, various issues dealing with parts of the bill. First, I should like to emphasize what I suggest is an absolutely imperative and essential condition if this enterprise is to have any success. I refer to the need for the wholehearted, enthusiastic and highly visible involvement of the Prime Minister. We did not get that feeling from his appearance on television the other night and have not

been encouraged by the reticence of the Prime Minister to this point, although I was glad to hear him suggest today that he might be speaking on Monday. The impression I have is derived not only from what he has left unsaid but from the manner in which he said what he did say.

If I were a show critic and had only one sentence by which to describe the performance of the Prime Minister on Monday night, it would be, "Leading man mumbles lines he doesn't believe in a play he finds unreal". I suggest that this is not the way in which to fashion and secure the confidence and co-operation of the great mass of Canadians. Even with such confidence and co-operation, which are conditions precedent to any realistic and reasonable effort to solve the crisis of inflation which has overwhelmed us, it will be difficult—without them it will be impossible. One gets the sinking feeling very early in the proceedings that the Prime Minister is heading for the bunker. This is totally unacceptable, in the circumstances, in view of the fact that the Prime Minister was the country's leading salesman against mandatory controls until Monday night. He alone can undo what he has done. There is no other way. Parliament and the country cannot tolerate another "death of a salesman."

The Prime Minister is not renowned for listening to advice, but perhaps he might take some of his own which he put forward on February 28, 1974, as recorded at page 36 of *Hansard* for that date. This is what he said:

● (1410)

—income controls risk hurting the small and the poor more than they do the big and the rich; and while that might be of minor concern to the more conservative governments and political parties, it is of great and fundamental concern to this government—

We do not believe that the workingman should be expected to bear an unfair share of the cost of solving the problems of inflation, and that is why we will ask him to treat with great skepticism any argument for general controls which does not set out all the facts, the pleasant as well as the unpleasant, those with political appeal and those without.

In all honesty, I say to the government and to the Prime Minister that if he really believes that a program of restraint can be made to work—and I am one who not only hopes but feels that it is essential—so that inflation can be contained, then he was to assume real leadership. Not only must he be sincere but he must also be perceived to be sincere. He is required to convince this parliament and the nation that this is his immediate and major task. I have to suggest that this has not happened so far, and what the Prime Minister said on Monday night could not in any way be construed as dealing with my remarks.

I have already set forth what the Prime Minister said in 1974. He may well think that he covered that up by his words etched in stone on television the other night. If this is what he thinks, he is not only wrong but he is, more importantly, doing a disservice to the program of the government and to Canadians. A one-shot commandeering of the television networks is just not good enough. His taciturnity in parliament is counterproductive in its effect. The working man, who was of so much rhetorical concern to the Prime Minister in February of 1974, does not have videotape equipment on which to replay the Prime Minister to bolster his spirits.

How is it helpful to this program if the workingman feels that to a muffler installer he may be a somebody, but