

Price Stability

in the terms of the motion before us, supported and reinforced by the fact that the minister refused to accept my suggestion that he might well agree to incorporate into the terms of the motion the amendment offered by the hon. member for Wellington-Grey (Mr. Howe).

Your Honour has made a ruling on that amendment. Of course we accept the ruling, but still I point out it is wise for the minister, if he wants a committee that will do a valuable, useful job, to consider that amendment between now and the conclusion of this debate, reviewing, reflecting and contemplating so that he may well come to the decision that the amendment offered by the hon. member for Wellington-Grey will add strength and sinew to this motion. As it stands now, Mr. Speaker, after the rejection of this amendment I find it very difficult to see anything useful in the committee. The motion reads:

That a special joint committee... be appointed to consider reports—

It is limited to considering these reports.
—of the Prices and Incomes Commission—

That is pretty strict wording; there are pretty strong limitations on what the functions of this joint committee will be, even strengthened by the addition of members of the other place, which of course is an issue which hon. friends to my left will deal with at a later time. The word "consider" is very restrictive when we consider what the committee will be able to do.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Baldwin: I thought I might be asked a question. Yes.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): In view of the fact that before the hon. member for Winnipeg North moved his amendment the hon. member for Peace River suggested to the minister that he might accept both amendments, does that still stand? In other words, will the members of his party support us in cutting the Senate out of this operation?

Mr. Baldwin: Not at this stage, Mr. Speaker. At the time I spoke I was not aware of the full content of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Had you no faith?

Mr. Baldwin: I sometimes have faith in the hon. member but not always in the views expressed by his party. Occasionally we are ad idem but there are times when we are not. In addition to considering reports of the Prices and Incomes Commission, the committee is authorized to deal with—

—such other related reports or papers as may be referred to the committee—

The committee is emasculated so far as its freedom of movement is concerned. It is only to consider parts of the PIC and such other matters as may be referred to it. We all know how these committees operate, and we know that it is only at the instance of the government that this special joint committee will have any authority, any right, any jurisdiction to consider issues related to this extremely serious and dangerous question of inflation. It is only when the government sees fit to bestow, out of its generosity, those rights on the committee that it will have an opportunity to do so. What use is this committee, inhibited, restricted, tied closely to the PIC reports and whatever else the government wants to give it? Under those circumstances I find it very difficult to support the motion. I will have to give it very careful thought before this debate is concluded.

I divide my argument into two parts. I deal with the whole question of committees and the powers of committees. These are questions that must be considered. Any member who comes to a decision on this question must first direct his attention to the value of a committee of this kind, or of any committee. To illustrate my point I wish to quote briefly from an editorial which appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* of Monday, April 27, 1970. It is collaterally relevant to this issue and to my argument because it deals with the powers of government and the opportunities of committees such as this to influence the operations of the government. Although the editorial happens to mention my name, that is only incidental. I quote:

Inside and outside Parliament, the Conservative opposition, notably Mr. Gerald Baldwin of Peace River, has mounted a campaign against what it sees as an alarming trend toward authoritarianism in the Trudeau government.

The action of cabinet ministers in attacking Auditor General Maxwell Henderson for his exposé of government waste, the white paper on tax reform, the setting up of Information Canada, and more have provided ammunition for Conservative critics.

But a pertinent question is whether the Conservatives are winning public support by attacking the growing power of government at the expense of Parliament.