

members and perhaps even a lot of hot air. Anyway, we shall see. National problems are of such magnitude that I believe that we can count on the good will of everyone to try to get out of this hole, if I may use this expression, to get out of this very critical situation. If both sides would show a bit of good will—I know that the hon. member for St-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner) will show a lot of good will and that his party particularly might help us—to sell the program, to make the people realize that it is not a freeze program but a voluntary control program directed mainly and particularly at those the government has been trying for a year to convince to restrain their demands. You will recall that the minister of Finance often said: Yes, I am in consultation with business people, large companies, corporations, trade unions, bigwigs. However, since they did not react positively during the last year, this may be partly why the government had to introduce legislation to finally apply income and prices policies which might save us from the inevitable disaster which is a regressive, inflationary and unproductive economy.

The same “big guns”, the same big corporations which said no are now compelled by law to follow certain guidelines. This is not everybody, I admit it. I think we will win the fight if we have the guts to tell them we are serious, that we want to implement positive measures, and then we will soon have far better conditions to live in.

● (1750)

Mr. C.-A. Gauthier (Roberval): Madam Speaker, on October 16, 1975, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) tabled in this House Bill C-73 to provide for the restraint of profit margins, prices, dividends and compensation in Canada. That was indeed the purpose of the bill.

Offhand, Madam Speaker, we conclude that it is simply the price and wage freeze contained in the 1974 Tory election platform but the minister hastens to say that it is not the price and wage freeze but that the bill has aimed at restraining profit margins, prices and salaries. Either I do not understand English, or the minister is dancing on the tight rope. He says, it is not a freeze but something that looks like a freeze, not a concrete step but a psychological manoeuvre. I do not think it is a freeze according to his explanations but a gel. It is indeed representatives of this government.

What is in the end the attack on inflation of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Minister of Finance? All are asking the same questions in this House while the minister seems to rely on the board headed by two illustrious political figures with fat salaries to give the population the explanations they dare give now.

And to prove that we are not the only ones, Madam Speaker, trying to discover what is hidden, under this troubling headline in today's *Le Devoir* of Montreal we read:

ATTACK ON INFLATION—EVEN EXPERTS ARE LOST

Imagine! And we were just told that the bill is clear. I quote:

Anti-Inflation Act

EVEN EXPERTS ARE LOST

The least one can say about the anti-inflation program proposed a week ago by Prime Minister Trudeau is that it brought out the seriousness of the economic situation in Canada and polarized the attention of people on the problem.

The program is not very well understood even by those experts who elaborated it.

Imagine! It is not understood even by those experts who put the program together.

—On the general terms there is agreement, and that is to say that wage earners cannot expect an increase of over 10 per cent during the 12 next months and companies cannot raise their prices beyond the increase in their basic costs.

It is broader; what is the basic cost? The question must be asked.

But where specific points are concerned, it is not that clear, since even the ministers do not agree as to the impact of the measures they ask Parliament to pass.

The Postmaster General, Mr. Bryce Mackasey, said that the postal workers who are demanding a 71 per cent wage increase, will not be subjected to the controls. But Mr. Donald Macdonald, the Minister of Finance, said that the decision would be left to the Anti-Inflation Board.

Mr. Richard O'Hagan, who is in charge of the promotional campaign in connection with the anti-inflation measures, says that it will not be possible to give anything but broad answers to people asking for explanations until all the details of the program are set out in black and white.

As concerns the details of the program, apparently it will be up to the anti-inflation board to lay them down. The article reads on:

“We cannot foresee how the text of the legislation will be interpreted...”

The lawyers have worked on the legislation, but in the final analysis, it is the Board that will decide upon the text of the legislation. And it reads further:

Inquiries are pouring into his office. “There is a tremendous interest in this program...”

It is obvious that many people are looking for loopholes. The controls apply to the 9.6 million people who make up the working force. But all the other workers are presumed to be good citizens who are willing to comply with the guidelines.

There are many exceptions. Wage increases that come with promotions are not subject to control. An employer can also grant increases above the prescribed limits if he can prove that he cannot attract or keep personnel for less.

The guidelines apply to all kinds of income: social benefits, bonuses, shares, etc.

Anti-Inflation Board Chairman Jean-Luc Pepin said: “If people want that bill to be a failure, they will find 111 means of evading it”.

Last night, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald), said on TV that the situation of Canada would become critical if unions refused to abide by the guidelines.

He mentioned that economic prospects for the winter are dull and it will take Canada longer than expected to recover.

In Toronto, Mr. Stephen Lewis, the leader of the NDP, accused the government of Ontario of ignoring its responsibilities—

And so on and so forth; I shall quote no further. Madam Speaker, I think opposition parties are not the only ones that do not understand this bill. I think most serious people who are not tied by the leg wonder where it will take us. How do you expect workers not to be apprehensive after such statements! Yesterday, before I was off on my way back, I met a very important group of workers now on strike because they did not manage to come to a reasonable agreement after months of bargaining. They