

would take no part in such arrangements. The commission followed up this effort by holding on February 9 and 10 a national conference on price stability.

• (8:10 p.m.)

The Canadian Labour Congress, which now has called for a conference, of course could have been at that conference had they acted differently in the fall. Following the conference of February, the Prices and Incomes Commission held further discussions with leaders of organized labour in which it was pointed out that wage and salary earners as a group could not disclaim responsibility for playing a part in the general restraint program. On March 23, in their annual submissions to the government both the CLC and the CNTU rejected again the principle of restraint on incomes. At the May conference of the CLC this position was restated.

As the House knows, on June 5 at the federal-provincial ministers of finance meeting the commission sought the support of governments in applying wage and salary criteria of 6 per cent including fringe benefits. The objective is to assure progress in reducing cost and price increases, permitting the federal government to relax further fiscal and monetary restraint. This proposal was fully supported by the federal government and is presently being considered by provincial governments.

As the House knows again, on June 16, this week, the commission met with the executive council of the CLC to discuss this proposal. No progress in modifying the CLC's attitude can be reported to date. The Canadian Labour Congress has now made a most intriguing suggestion following the meeting of June 16 although it was not discussed at the meeting, that the government convene a national meeting of government, industry and labour representatives with the assistance of the best technical personnel available to work toward effective and equitable solutions. Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that the government is a little puzzled by such a suggestion at this time. This is the reason I am placing on the record the record of the negotiations. We as a government have great confidence in the Prices and Incomes Commission which has demonstrated, surely, by word, deed and goodwill its desire to find effective and equitable solutions.

If there is to be a conference, the Prices and Incomes Commission is the instrument for organizing such a conference. Having put

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18 months of effort into establishing the Prices and Incomes Commission and its machinery, we are not at this point going to junk it and start out with some other kind of machinery. This latest suggestion by the Canadian Labour Congress was not discussed with the commission on June 16, nor has it been discussed with any member of the government despite the very many opportunities that have been presented to do so. Therefore, it is a little difficult for me to know precisely the intention of the Canadian Labour Congress. What is it that the Canadian Labour Congress would hope to see emerge from such a conference? Within the same statement calling for the conference the president of the CLC said:

We are involved not in a national inflation but in a universal inflation over which our internal policies have little if any control.

It would seem to me to be of little use for the government to call an organized conference simply to be told that all our problems are beyond our control and are because of the effect of the Viet Nam war or something else. It is the view of this government that there are things we can do with the Canadian economy. While we are subject to international forces, there are things we can do in Canada to improve our price performance and price stability. If such a conference were useful, the Prices and Incomes Commission is the body to organize it, but surely we should have some indication that there will be something meaningful forthcoming from such a conference. Surely, before calling or organizing such a conference we should have some indication that it will be successful and will make progress toward better price stability in Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the minister, but I am afraid his time has expired. Is there unanimous consent to allow the minister to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful to the House for allowing me this time, and I shall shorten my remarks as much as possible. As I say, surely we are entitled to some indication that such a conference to be organized by the commission will be successful. We will wait with interest to see whether any such indication is forthcoming.

Because of the remarks made in this House today and on previous occasions I should like to mention briefly some of the work the com-