

helping to reduce these inflationary pressures, the sooner we can adjust our fiscal and monetary policies so as to provide a positive stimulus to economic activity and employment in Canada.

I believe the proposed parliamentary committee has an important role to play, not only in assisting the present program of the commission but also in helping ourselves and the commission to broaden the program and make it more comprehensive and effective.

Mr. W. M. Howe (Wellington-Grey): Mr. Speaker, we have all listened with a great deal of interest to the minister in introducing this resolution. We might refer to it as the gospel according to Mr. Basford. I do not understand his preaching to the labour movement of Canada, on which he lays so much blame for not agreeing to some of the proposals brought forward by his government and by the Prices and Incomes Commission.

• (3:30 p.m.)

We are also getting a little tired of being compared to other countries in the world when it comes to economic problems and inflationary trends. This great nation of ours is not at all similar in terms of size, resources, people and problems, to other countries. I think it is a false premise to compare Canada to any other country in the world. The United States, of course, has ten times the population we have, and if their inflation is greater than ours it is because their population is greater.

Time after time measures are brought forward in this House to deal with economic problems. Some time ago when the minister's department was established it was said to be the great panacea of inflation control. It was going to take hold of those bad businessmen who were putting up prices; it was going to straighten out the labour unions and stop their wage demands. We used this vague term "stability of prices". I do not know that there was ever a period of price stability in this country. There have always been fluctuations up and down, but sometimes prices go up a lot faster than they should. Sometimes those who are to blame for this shuffle the blame on to somebody else and insist that the measures that have been brought forward by the government have had no effect on inflation, on the cost of living, on reducing the number of unemployed or on reducing interest rates. In so many areas of the economy we have the highest percentages we have had for many years.

Price Stability

Returning to the subject of committees and having people working on problems of this type, I was rather interested to read an article that appeared in the *Telegram* of Tuesday, April 28, written by Dennis Braithwaite. I think there is a lot of truth in what he says. It is headed, "Asking too many fool questions" and goes on to say:

It is possible to fail through knowing your subject too well, and that is what's happening to us Canadians.

If we were a little more ignorant of what's going on we might be able to feel something for our country. But every aspect of Canadian life has been so searchingly investigated by royal commissions, parliamentary committees, task forces, polls, surveys, ESP and grandma's ouija board that our minds are clogged with enough undigested data to gag a computer.

The result is chronic anxiety, inter-regional suspicion and national neurosis. If we were to go on talking about our problems for the next 100 years, which seems entirely likely, we would never regurgitate all the half-truths, myths, faulty statistics and just plain wrong information that's stuck in our collective consciousness. And, in the meantime, all the talk and worry prevents our accomplishing anything or even having a good time.

I should also like to comment on one of the final paragraphs in the article because it could be applicable to this proposed committee:

Of course, royal commissions are on the way out, too expensive; parliamentary committees, in particular, Senate committees, are the thing today. The Senators, obviously, are keeping themselves busy investigating everything from poverty to the decline of burlesque in order to squelch all this talk about the Senate being a useless appendage that should be abolished.

I am not going to comment on the latter part of this editorial because those gentlemen are going to join in this committee to assist the government to ascertain what is wrong with the economy. As I say, we have had a proliferation of organizations in this area. For example, there is the minister's department which has over 600 employees. This year we also set up a standards branch which, according to a press release issued by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin), is an organization set up to protect the buying public and to offer assistance to manufacturers; this is said to be the major benefit of a national standards council.

Mr. Basford: But the official opposition is blocking its passage through the House.

Mr. Howe: This is yet one more organization that is supposed to do great things for the nation, which is what the minister's