

*Anti-Inflation Act*

the bosom of the government without an opportunity for controls by parliament over the exercise of this power.

I want to deal now with the question of timing, Mr. Speaker. The Government of Canada which won its last election by caricaturing this proposal is now swallowing what it said, and is introducing a program that only 14 months ago it vigorously condemned from coast to coast.

The Minister defends the timing of this turnabout by saying that public support now exists for some kind of program of controls. What he means is that the Liberal party and their Liberal flacks have stopped their campaign, have stopped their deliberate attempt to create fears about the way governments might deal with the serious problems of inflation. They have stopped trying to alarm Canadians about actions that must be taken. Consequently, because they have stopped inciting fear, there is now in the minister's view some greater measure of public support for programs which in essence they condemned 14 months ago.

There are arguments about the kinds of controls that were proposed then and are proposed now, and of course there are differences in the programs. We on this side of the House are pleased to have these differences recognized. The proposal which was introduced by my leader, and supported by members of this party in the election campaign, was less lasting than this, which means by implication it was less dangerous than the matter we are considering tonight.

The fact remains, and it is testimony to the cynicism of the Liberal party, that in the election campaign of 14 months ago—the election campaign which gave the government its mandate—the Liberal party opposed with all the energy it could muster, the essence of the program announced the other night on television. It opposed it in a way which was not only simplistic but which was as near to dishonest as one can remember in any national election campaign. We see the spectre of this cynical government embracing what it condemned on the way to victory in an election. But ministers are still not open enough with the people of Canada to admit that last time they were engaging in election tactics, and that the problems of inflation are so serious that they require now, as they required then, some approach of this nature.

● (2100)

The other matter to which I referred earlier is the extraordinary nature of the powers which the government seeks to gather unto itself by these proposals. There is to be a capacity here to step in and seize records, a capacity which reminds me and other of my colleagues of some powers which were included in the petroleum administration bill which, coincidentally or otherwise, was guided through this parliament earlier by the minister who is now Minister of Finance. There is the explicit provision, explicitly referred to with pride by the minister in his remarks, to the effect that the guidelines for implementing this legislation are to be established by order in council, are to be set down by the cabinet without reference to parliament. In other words, as it now stands, the teeth, the nature of this legislation, will be established in Cabinet regardless, perhaps, of the impact on Canadians.

[Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain).]

There is written into the bill the power for the cabinet to reverse the administrator, to say that his decision is wrong. That may be necessary, but it certainly creates the capacity for abuse. It tends to concentrate all power with regard to this measure in the hands of cabinet. Most alarming of all, there is in this bill the capacity to prolong the life of the system of controls beyond the time that is already longer than many Canadians are comfortable with now.

Clearly, when a bill of that kind is presented to the House, a bill which includes provisions for excessive power to be gathered into the centre, there is an obligation upon members of this House to examine the legislation in detail, to scrutinize each specific proposal and to take the time that is necessary in the standing committee not only to seek information, which we must do, but also to introduce amendments which will make the bill a less dangerous example of power concentrated at the centre, a power which might be exercised arbitrarily in a way which would seriously and permanently distort the economy of the country. That is particularly important with regard to this bill, because it was introduced by a government which has been in the habit, since its first election, of gathering control to the centre, of aggrandizing its own power, of weakening the power and capacity to create of other elements of Canadian society and the Canadian economy.

This government has a dangerous record of centralizing power. That is why we must be particularly concerned about what it is to do with this bill which allows it, as it stands, so much latitude. It must be emphasized that we are not dealing here with a temporary measure. This measure will last for three years at least, and may last longer than that.

Many of us, since the early boom in the publication of *Maclean's* magazine as a news magazine, have received in our offices free copies of *Maclean's* magazine. The most recent edition which arrived in most of our offices the other day contained an interview by the editor of *Maclean's*, Mr. Peter Newman, with the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau). That interview assumes some association with the legislation which has been introduced in this House. The interview, according to the preface, took place on September 30, which is 20 days ago. I want to quote what the Prime Minister said 20 days ago about the measure before us tonight, a measure which can have serious and permanent effects on the Canadian economy.

Here is how *Maclean's* reports what the Prime Minister said 20 days ago about controls. Replying to a question, the Prime Minister said:

But I think every experience I know of—most recently the United States and the British experiences—is to the effect that when you take controls off you begin more or less where you were before.

*Maclean's* asked, "The economy just catches up," and the Prime Minister replied:

Exactly. People say, "Okay, we've been held down, or we've been controlled for a year. Now let's hurry up and get those wage increases, those salary increases and those price increases that we've been prevented from getting by the intervention of the state."

That was the philosophy of the Prime Minister 20 days ago. Twenty days ago he said that when you impose a system of controls you are only building up problems. One would deduce from that statement, made before the emergency announcement on television on the eve of two by-