

*Food Prices Committee*

House began to sit, but that was not the only time I had that kind of call.

● (1510)

**An hon. Member:** Oh!

**Mr. Reilly:** Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the hon. member. If he would like to rise to his feet, I will yield the floor to him.

**An hon. Member:** Get on with your speech.

**Mr. Reilly:** The hon. member will need to speak louder.

**An hon. Member:** Get on with your speech.

**Mr. Reilly:** Mr. Speaker, what I want to know from the government or any member is, what do you tell these people? What do you tell them, while we sit around here boring the people in the galleries rigid with irrelevancies, diatribes and lectures. What the people want, need to know and have a palpable right to know is what precisely we intend to do about those problems that they cannot solve.

Prices have increased by 20 per cent in four years. Have pensions risen 20 per cent in four years? No, they have not. Have unemployment insurance benefits gone up by 20 per cent in four years? Has the minimum wage gone up by 20 per cent in four years? The only pensions on retirement, or welfare benefits if you care to call them that, that have gone up are the pensions members of this House are entitled to if they manage to hang on here for six years. We have not done very much for the people who cannot help themselves in this country, and I think it is about time we got around to doing just that.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Reilly:** Mr. Speaker, as the economist Galbraith once put it, "Men of conservative temperament have long suspected that one thing follows the other." Nowhere, in my submission, is this proven better than in the field of economics. We have tried to hold inflation down by the tried and true method of setting it off against employment. That, for a variety of reasons, has failed. We have tried persuading management and unions to agree voluntarily to hold down wages and prices, and that course has failed.

The choices have dwindled to the point where in my opinion two are left. We can pursue the careless course we have followed, the course that shows disdain for the real problems affecting hundreds of thousands of citizens in this country, we can continue to plan for a country in which inflation is rampant and in which poverty is an equally predictable concomitant of it, a country in which people will never have a chance to dig themselves out of the mess we have made for them, or we can follow another course: we can attempt to regulate wages and prices. I am not talking here about guidelines or persuasion; those have been tried.

**An hon. Member:** What about other incomes, including ours?

[Mr. Reilly]

**Mr. Reilly:** I would agree with an income freeze right now. I would not have sat in the last parliament and legislated such an increase for myself if I had been here as a member.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** The hon. member certainly was not here.

**An hon. Member:** But his colleagues were.

**Mr. Reilly:** If hon. members from the party which pretends to speak for the weak, the old and the poor mean to denigrate the things I have been saying with that kind of cheap, juvenile barracking, let them go ahead. I hope their remarks are on *Hansard*, and I hope it is recorded that they were made by members of the NDP.

**An hon. Member:** This is not a television game.

**Mr. Reilly:** It is marvellous to hear this kind of thing. I only regret that more of the people of Canada are not here to listen to the high level of debate practiced by the party to my left which thinks itself an intellectual party.

**An hon. Member:** You are not on television.

**Mr. Reilly:** Neither are you. As I said to the people across the aisle a few minutes ago, it is a good thing the hon. member is not on television.

It has been said that wage and price controls would hamper the operation of the free market. I do not believe that to be true, because the market in those areas which have a bearing on inflation is not free anyway. Prices and wages are fixed by powerful corporations and powerful unions; there is very little free movement in those areas that really affect the people of Canada. I believe that the public of Canada deserves a place in the councils of those organizations if we are to make certain that the public interest will be served when those in lofty positions make a move.

There is no need for me to become involved in the area of farm prices or small manufacturing prices, Mr. Speaker, because these, as nearly as I can determine, are regulated by the market and there is no need to interfere with it. The only place where we need to impose regulations is in that area where powerful corporations and powerful unions now make the rules. Perhaps we might include certain essential areas such as rent controls. Those controls need to be imposed, perhaps only temporarily, until we can determine how to bring those factors more into line with the incomes of so many thousands of Canadians who are not making it now. Those prices need to be frozen.

I think there is no doubt that the people who are suffering under rampant inflation want controls. They do not want guidelines or voluntary restraints that penalize those who co-operate and reward those who refuse to co-operate. They want firm, mandatory controls which will make certain that those on fixed incomes, the working poor and the unemployed, will be rescued from the relentless exploitation of the rich and powerful and selfish people of this country.

If this government and this House of Commons truly understands its responsibility to the people of this coun-