

Anti-Inflation Act

Progressive-Conservatives who declare: "We are going to freeze everything" But for how long? For 90 days? Our aim is not to freeze anything but to cut down some profits, to curb the expectations which for over a year have made the situation in this country more and more difficult.

To come back to the hon. member from Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner), he is credited with saying; "What's new?"; He knows fully well what is new. What is new is the kind of inflation we have today which is very much unlike last year's. Today's inflation, as the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe knows full well, today's inflation is home grown.

Mr. Wagner: You don't say.

[*English*]

Mr. Muir: It is 100 per cent worse.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): It is not 100 per cent worse and you know it. Last year's inflation was for the most part imported, because oil prices increased 400 per cent, because of world wide and global problems, bad crops in some countries, as hon. members know very well. Whether you admit it or not, Canadians know it. They found that out in their constituencies—

An hon. Member: In Hochelaga!

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): —they found that out everywhere. And, as you just said, they may have found that out in Hochelaga too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Order, please. I must remind the hon. member that he too must address the Chair and not members directly.

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): I apologize, madam Speaker. I followed the example set by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner).

An hon. Member: A bad example indeed.

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): I agree, that was a bad example to follow. In any case, Madam Speaker, I feel that of all the problems that now besiege Canadians, inflation is no doubt the most intolerable and perhaps the most insidious. It is intolerable because it affects us all, because it compounds social and economic problems, and especially because it undermines the purchasing power of our Canadian dollar. It can easily be seen that if the value of our dollar declines constantly, so does our purchasing power, and the small wage earners as people in higher income brackets will be facing an unacceptable and indeed very disquieting situation if it is not controlled, as the minister told us the other day. That is why this government came forward with Bill C-73, which proposes measures to deal with runaway inflation.

[*English*]

● (1740)

All Canadians in all walks of life must ask questions about this policy and how it will affect their lives and work. The benefits of restraint are long term, and the economic effects of non-restraint complicated. Therefore

[Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier).]

all members of parliament, government supporters and opposition members, must tell the people in their ridings that they must join together in fighting the present most disquieting inflationary trend.

This afternoon I heard an NDP member say that he told people in his riding to defy the government and not support the program. I find his position difficult to understand. Surely it is not acceptable for a member of parliament to encourage open defiance of the government. I will say no more, except that he ought to have twisted his tongue before saying what he did.

Inflation is created by many converging forces, some at home and some originating outside this country. We are manipulated by forces which are sometimes beyond our control. No government can manipulate people by decree. Personally, I do not think any government can succeed in winning support for an anti-inflation program, or any other program, unless it manages to educate people about the forces which confront us and what the solutions are to our problems. We need comprehension. Sometimes these proposed solutions are hard to understand.

Economics is not an easy subject to understand and I do not pretend to be well versed in the field. Perhaps my weakest subject is economics. For that reason I thank the hon. member for Thunder Bay (Mr. Penner) for what he pointed out to me. This past summer he read much the same material as I read. The hon. member referred to the question of housing. That is an important issue. Also, like the hon. member, I had occasion during the summer to read the C.D. Howe Research Institute publication on housing. It was interesting and enlightening.

As parliamentary secretary to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, I hope to take an active role in reorienting or restructuring programs, so that we may deal more aggressively with our existing problems. If any mistake has been made, it has been made in the area of demand. There is no demand problem in Canada, at least not in my area. There is a supply problem, to which the government will address itself. The government deals with the problem of housing in its pamphlet "Attack on Inflation." The problem deserves our attention. I hope, confidently, that the government will come forward soon with measures to encourage supply.

I hope that land for construction can be made available to our people and that contractors and entrepreneurs will support the government's programs so that we can surmount the crisis which has been developing in the housing field. Bearing that in mind, I am most pleased to be able to participate with the minister in this work.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, I do not want to take up too much time. I believe that the matter of a freeze—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): —not of a freeze but of the anti-inflation program, the word inflation comes back to me now—It was a slip of the tongue—I was thinking about you.

The anti-inflation program of the government is a program which must be sold, which must be understood and which may require a lot of energy on the part of the hon.