

Anti-Inflation Act

the lower income brackets, for those on fixed incomes, for pensioners and others, to catch up. I plead that we practice consistency and that hon. members in all parts of the House, especially those who supported the principle of enabling members to catch up—I did not think we needed it, and it certainly added to inflation, but it was passed by this House—do the same for those down at the bottom of the income scale.

Mr. Peters: That was a welfare bill, a MacGuigan welfare bill.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friend says that was a welfare bill, a MacGuigan welfare bill. That is understandable.

Mr. Speaker, I am about to conclude. I was interested yesterday when the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. MacFarlane) made his pitch for this legislation and said that we are faced with a war on avarice and that that is what we must deal with. Somehow, as Canadians, we must join and make sure that avarice does not get the better of us. In my remarks today I am not talking about persons who are displaying any avarice at all. I am talking about those on the minimum wage, those at lower income levels, war veterans, old age pensioners and persons who are trying to live on annuities based on the 4 per cent factor of many years ago.

Surely these people, when they ask for the chance to catch up which the government has proclaimed in this white paper, are not being avaricious; they are simply asking for fairness. I urge that not only do they have the right to be treated fairly, but that this whole proposal for economic controls and the whole attempt to get our economy back on the rails will have a much better chance of success if it is done fairly.

My complaint about the guidelines, which are apparently to be passed under Bill C-73 if and when it passes, is that they are not fair to the needy, to pensioners and to those on lower incomes, and therefore they are not fair to Canadians as a whole or to the good name of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, I intend to take about 10 or 15 minutes, to deal with one point only and to make a suggestion in the last sentence of my speech. I would ask the ministers present not to leave, but to convey my suggestion to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald). I will ask, on behalf of the opposition, for a certain step which I think might make the awesome powers we are being asked to give the government perhaps a little more palatable. I will only deal with one point, though it is tempting to point out that when one considers this whole matter, certain gentlemen in the party opposite, the government party, have called for a spirit of Dunkirk when they might be better advised to remain silent. After all, the spirit of Dunkirk comes better from a Winston Churchill than it does from a Neville Chamberlain.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McCleave: I will try again. The other brief point I wish to make is a valid one. The difference between the Conservative philosophy in the last election and that of the present government is that we would have imposed a

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

hair shirt on Canadians for three months, not put them in an iron maiden for three years.

The burden of my remarks must start from seven or eight years ago in the House of Commons. This is an important argument; it has not been raised in this debate before. I will try to tackle it as succinctly as I can, but it has to be properly presented. Some seven or eight years ago the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan) was chairman of a special committee on statutory instruments. One of the recommendations in its report which was presented to the House dealt with the regulations made in the exercise of the powers of the governor in council in so far as those regulations were of a legislative character. It was felt by the committee then that these should be subject to the same procedures and requirements as other regulations of a legislative character, and then, except in the interests of national security, there should be no exemptions from the requirements of the Regulations Act other than as to publication. I have dealt with two of the principal points in the report. Another one reads:

● (1720)

Section 9 of the Regulations Act, which allows exemptions from the provisions of that act, should be amended to provide for exemptions from publication and time of publication only.

Finally, recommendation No. 14 of that report:

All regulations, regardless of the regulation-making authority, should be available for public inspection.

The generosity that was suggested in the report by the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville some seven years ago was not met in the law that was passed, the Statutory Instruments Act. The regulations that came before the committee established by the changes in those rules of the House of Commons—that is, the Standing Committee on Regulations and other Statutory Instruments—covered a wide variety of the regulations made by the government, but the regulations did not go before that committee in totality. In other words, there is an important area of regulations passed by government departments and agencies that are exempt from scrutiny by any public body whatsoever. There is no recourse against them in the House of Commons or the other place; there is no recourse against them in the statutory instruments committee.

Because I happen to be the House chairman of that committee, and because I think this point is important, I am going to hammer away at it in the next few minutes. It may be asked how this can possibly affect debate on Bill C-73, but I say it is a very important matter and I draw my analogy from section 58 of the Immigration Act which reads in part as follows:

The minister may make regulations, not inconsistent with this act, respecting the . . . duties and obligations of immigration officers and the methods and procedure for carrying out duties and obligations whether in Canada or elsewhere.

I can report to the House and the country, through you, Mr. Speaker, that no regulations from the Department of Immigration have ever appeared before the statutory instruments committee because of the definitions set out in the Statutory Instruments Act. No regulations whatsoever. Yet immigration officers are armed with manuals that no one is permitted to see outside of the Immigration Department but which have a life and death effect on