

*Government Administrative Policies*

tion was completely ineffective is the figures that I just read indicating the tremendous increase in the banks' profits.

It is significant that the government's idea of restriction is for the Minister of Finance to say that if corporations are making more profits than they should, the Prices and Incomes Commission will bring this to the public's attention. What the public wants to know is whether the government knows about it and what will be done about it. The fact is, of course, that other forms of income have not been restricted. But the government and their front man, the Prices and Incomes Commission, have been seeking to get the wage earners and salary earners of this country to accept restraints which they are not imposing on anyone else.

When I asked the Minister of Finance yesterday about the proposal of the Canadian Labour Congress to have a conference called by the government to which business and labour would be invited to devise "a more realistic and co-operative approach to our present economic problems", what was the minister's reply? It was that labour is somewhat late in asking for a conference. He said that the Prices and Incomes Commission had already invited them to a conference and they would not come. Why would the trade unions attend a conference called by a commission that has no power and no teeth to agree to a voluntary restraint for other sectors of the economy but to accept a binding restraint for itself? What the Minister of Finance forgets is that when the industrialists, the manufacturers, the financial institutions and the banks give a verbal assurance that they will not increase their incomes, there is nothing binding about it. As the minister himself said, if they violate it, all the Prices and Incomes Commission can do is to draw that to the public's attention.

But when organized workers agree to a wage restraint, they sign a collective bargaining agreement. That is not a verbal agreement, that is not something that can be violated, it is something which is binding for two and three years. The organized workers of this country have very properly taken the position that if they are going to be asked to sign collective bargaining agreements restricting the amounts of increased income they can get, then the other segments of the Canadian economy must equally be bound by restrictive measures that will have some teeth rather than mere verbal assurances and pious expressions of hope that cannot be enforced.

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

What is the use of going to a conference with the Prices and Incomes Commission? They cannot guarantee anything. They cannot guarantee that the 6 per cent will be applicable across the board, will be applicable to executive salaries, to professional fees, to corporation profits, to dividends, to interest rates, and to taxes.

The government has used the Prices and Incomes Commission as a patsy, as a front man to do the dirty work which the government has not had the courage to do itself.

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

**Mr. Orlikow:** The minister is hiding behind the curtain.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** Only the government has the power and the authority to sit down with business and labour and say: If you will do this to restrict your income, we will guarantee that other forms of income will be restricted in the same manner and for the same duration of time. The Prices and Incomes Commission cannot do that; only the government can do it. Because the government does not have the courage to do it, they use the Prices and Incomes Commission, which they call an independent body, to carry on a public relations effort for them in an attempt to convince the people that the government is doing something about inflation when, as a matter of fact, they are doing nothing except to make it worse.

I have given notice that I will put forward a motion, when we vote on the various items tonight, on the item which pays the cost of the Prices and Incomes Commission. We in this party propose to vote against that item because the Prices and Incomes Commission has proven to be absolutely useless. We do not think the government ever intended it to be useful. If the government wanted merely a statistic and data collecting agency, it has plenty of agencies in the government to gather this kind of information. But a commission that has no power other than to gather statistical material and no authority other than to make suggestions to which no one until now has paid much attention is a waste of time and a waste of money. We shall vote to abolish the Prices and Incomes Commission in the hope that the government will then step forward and accept its own responsibilities, because the government and nobody else has the responsibility to lay down the policies to deal with the problem of inflation.