

Anti-Inflation Act

my voice sounded very good when I said wage and price controls would not work. I had no embarrassment in saying that. The timing was wrong. The short period was wrong and the freeze was wrong so far as I was concerned. Like many others I have no great priority on what is absolutely right. If hon. members have listened they will know that I said pretty strongly what I did say. I referred to this problem as a war. I believe that if we do not get that through to the Canadian public we will not achieve what we want to achieve.

I think you will remember there was a man called Chamberlain who was criticized roundly for what he did, but he did give a reprieve while people prepared for the onslaught. We might very well have had a reprieve in this case. That may have been the wrong time, and this may be exactly the right time. The historians who write about this will not be in this House; we will all be gone then. But the people may read it.

An hon. Member: You say it with a smile.

Mr. MacFarlane: I did not intend to smile much in this speech. I want to conclude by saying we would be extremely wrong, on all sides of the House, if we did not recognize that the Canadian public can really be aroused and brought to their feet, working together in a way that would be a war-like attitude in peacetime days. I think we must accept and say over and over again a thousand times that the policy really is to try to make things better for those who are not in the power groups, because if we do in some way improve the situation their lot will be better. This must be said over and over again.

Finally, it must be said that this is indeed a war on avarice. I am very much afraid there are many people who are far better economists than I who want to place it all in the business realm or in the wages realm, but I would say at this time that we had better be prepared for the fact that this is not easy. I do not expect in the next few months to find any cheers. I expect to be going to every shopping centre in my riding. I expect to be going to every legion hall, I expect, particularly, to be visiting union halls. I hope to be visiting those who happen to be Conservatives, members of the NDP and members of the Social Credit party in my area. I will give them special attention because they will have some things they will want to say to me. I expect to do that, but I expect to be doing it six months and one year from now. If three years from now, or at any time, we can stand up and say the battle is 10 per cent won, you will find me cheering the loudest. Remember, it is that serious.

I do not believe any war in which we have been involved has ever been won on any other basis. I do not believe we knew that Vimy Ridge would occur, that Ypres would occur or that the Battle of Britain would occur in the way it did. We had to go into these things with the desire of placing ourselves on the line and placing ourselves before people to take the criticisms, the barbs and make the decisions. I think if people over there are talking about history, they may very well find that out of this so-called war on avarice people will be written up in history, none the least of whom will be the present Minister of Finance.

[Mr. MacFarlane.]

● (1550)

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago when I heard that the hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Macdonald), who was then minister of energy, mines and resources, was to be the new minister of finance, the first thought that came to my mind was, "Oh, oh; watch out. Canada will get clobbered." That came to my mind because over the past seven years since I have been in the House the minister has created the impression of being a tough guy with the spiked club for the government. It seems that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) uses him as a clobbering tool or a tool for confrontations.

We can review the history which shows that. In 1969 there were the rule changes when the present Minister of Finance, who was then House leader, clobbered the House of Commons. He took away our right to examine government spending and brought in closure to muzzle the opposition. Then he was appointed the minister of energy, mines and resources and acted in the same style at a crucial period in the life of the country when the spectre of energy shortages first appeared on the horizon. The same minister was used to clobber the provinces over the constitution, and indeed to really clobber the oil industry. Now, in his position as finance minister, he can clobber with this bill everybody who had not been clobbered before. With the power that he is seeking in this bill, he will certainly be able to do it at will.

When the former minister of finance resigned, there was speculation that he did so because he wanted to bring in a prices and incomes policy but could not do it because he could not get cabinet to support the idea. Now it is obvious that the opposite was the case. It is more likely that he was asked by the Prime Minister to step aside because what was needed was a man with a spiked club, not one with a silver tongue, the silver tongue having failed to obtain consensus following his consultations.

Before I speak on Bill C-73 and the principle behind it, let me note some comments that have been made by the Prime Minister and the former minister of finance on income and price controls which were proposed during the course of the past 1½ to two years. During the course of my remarks I would not like to appear to be serving up for the Prime Minister or members on his side a delectable dish of crow, since I did not prescribe this diet for the Prime Minister—he has his own counsellors to thank for that—but by the end of the debate on the measure I suppose someone will see that he eats it. Eating crow, perhaps because of the bitter flavour of the meat, is an excellent remedy for overwhelming pride, or possibly for lack of honesty with the people of Canada.

Let me start with this tidbit trimmed out of a question and answer session starring the Prime Minister, held at the Lindsay Collegiate and Vocational School at Lindsay, Ontario, on May 23 of this year. Someone in the audience, troubled by the way the government seemed to be saying one thing and doing another, very reasonably asked:

Mr. Trudeau, why does your proposed policy regarding wage and price freezing closely resemble that of the Conservatives last year?

It was not recorded out of which side of his mouth the Prime Minister made his reply, but his words have been reported as follows: