

ties in the program that this government has now put forward that many Canadians might not be blamed if they were to prefer sitting on the bench for a while before joining the team. These inequities are now becoming very clear. While it is possible for business enterprises to seek increases in prices through cost justification, it appears somehow impossible for the average citizen to do the same. The average citizen's increases are fixed, frozen and immovable. The hon. member for Drummond (Mr. Pinard) was alluding to these things a few moments ago.

Surely, one would not be too specious to ask why it would not be in some way more just if this program had some place in its operation for recognition in rising individual costs. Surely, if business enterprises can make their case within the context of this program, it will appear unjust if citizens cannot do the same. My leader has said that this program will involve rough justice if it is to survive. I say that there are so many weaknesses in this program that to suggest it will bring about any form of justice is simply to do so on the basis of faith rather than fact.

There is no question that my colleagues and I—who had the courage, by the way, to level with the country a year ago—will seek to support the principle and purposes of this legislation, but it is fair for us to warn the government this afternoon that if they are not prepared to seek meaningful amendment and modification so as to more properly assure just legislation and implementation of this program, this party will be prepared to clearly state its opposition when the opportunity arises.

The open handed nature of this bill which, by the way, runs beyond the normal traditional mandate of the government surely leads to some serious speculation. Has the government lost all faith in the ability of the market and the economy to respond to certain restraints and secure its own levels? Is there justification for those in the business community who fear that the price justification mechanisms in the bill are not even three years temporary, but are really a new permanent fixture of the government's economic management?

● (1730)

There is very little in these measures for the working men and women of Canada. I recall a campaign commercial in 1974, which ended with the following line:

The working men and women of Canada don't want their wages frozen.  
Vote Liberal!

In 1974 this party put forward a program that would have kept the cost of the working man down temporarily, restrained income increases, but a program that would have only asked the working man to carry the burden for 90 days. We asked the working men and women of Canada to accept the responsibility that we were prepared to enforce for all sectors of the economy, including the government. But we told the working men and women of this country that within 90 days they could seek increases within moderation, and that they could continue building security.

To limit the working men and women of Canada at the bottom of the wage earning scale to a \$600 increase in income is absolutely heartless. It is not a situation that

### *Anti-Inflation Act*

men and women of good conscience can be party to in this House for very long.

The scope of this bill, the length of its provisions, and the cynicism and misrepresentation by the government can no longer be viewed with equanimity. The future of this bill and its effectiveness are not threatened by its own provisions but by the insincerity of the government that has brought it forward. That insincerity re-commenced on July 9, 1974, and cannot be expected to evaporate from the mind of the average citizen. Indeed, I think it was that very insincerity that was very much on the minds of the working men and women of the riding of Hochelaga in my own province of Quebec.

A year ago a political party in this country said, "The working men and women of Canada don't want their wages frozen". Madam Speaker, with this government in power and with this party in power, the same party in power, the working men and women of Canada face the possibility of having their futures frozen. That, Madam Speaker, my colleagues and I will never accept.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Urban Affairs):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to take part in the debate on Bill C-73, at the second reading stage. Before starting to talk about the bill, I believe there are a few observations made by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner) which perhaps deserve being answered. I think that the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe preaches in French a theory which, in my opinion, is entirely false. He said the government had initiated a price freeze policy, which is entirely false. The government has not established any price freeze policy.

**An hon. Member:** He does not know the difference!

**Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier):** During the last electoral campaign his party proposed a price freeze for 90 days, with nothing after that period of time. It is the "nothing after", as the hon. member knows quite well, that has contributed most to the defeat of this party. Canadians were rightly skeptical about the policy hap hazardly set forth by his party. Above all, they were skeptical. They were afraid of the 90-day freeze with nothing afterwards.

This bill, Madam Speaker, does not provide a freeze policy, but restrictive measures which will be extended on a three-year period. Canadians will know—they already know today—what this program is all about. The official opposition and the one on my right, the New Democrats, advocated a selective freeze, they being socialists, with a possibility of justification, of increase, under a procedure badly explained.

And here again we hear hon. members on the other side saying on the one hand "Freeze" and on the other "Not entirely". We cannot even tell what the opposition wants from the government and the Canadian people understand even less what the hon. members opposite are trying to say. Because since... If the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) wishes to speak, let him walk in, otherwise he should keep quiet.

I have trouble understanding the New Democrats who claim: "We are going to freeze but selectively" and the