

*Anti-Inflation Act*

Madam Speaker, I do not think that pieces of legislation such as those we adopted over the previous months to increase by 10 cents the price of the gallon of gas for wage earners, for workers who commute, shorten the gap between those who earn less and those who earn more. In the present economic conditions, a government must essentially propose as the aim of its fiscal, monetary and economic policy to shorten the gap between those at the very bottom of the wage scale and those at the very top.

Madam Speaker, I ask for the support of my colleagues so that we can all put pressure, not only on the federal Minister of Finance, but also on our respective provincial finance ministers so that employees subject to those minimum wage decrees can at least obtain increases equal to those provided for in the legislation. I think that is the least we can do if, as the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) suggested, we want to see to it that the legislation applies to everyone and that the burden of the fight against inflation is justly borne by all Canadians whatever their income level.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin):** It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock this evening.

[English]

**AFTER RECESS**

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

**Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt):** Madam Speaker, before we broke for the supper hour the hon. member for Cumberland-Colchester North (Mr. Coates) said that the whole matter of fighting inflation and being responsible for bringing inflation under control rested with the example we set and gave to others. He was, of course, referring to ministers of the government in the way they conducted their departments. I think the way we conduct ourselves in this House is an example to the Canadian people.

The hon. member forgot some other very important aspects of how we conduct ourselves in the House of Commons. For example, we ought to be prepared to eliminate the subsidized meals served in this building. We ought to be able to say that the prices in the cafeteria and restaurant of the House of Commons are the same as working class Canadians pay when they buy their lunch.

We ought to be able to say that members of parliament who want to fly to Europe should not use Canadian armed forces planes to go on holidays. One of the arguments made in this House for increased indemnities for members was that they should be permitted a wage that they can live on and do things other Canadians do. It seems to me no private Canadian citizen can climb on to what is called euphemistically "Richardson's airline" and fly on holiday to Europe. This kind of belt tightening must be demonstrated to the public.

The hon. member for Maisonneuve-Rosemont (Mr. Joyal), a government member, made a good speech. He criticized the bill presented to the House in a way that New Democrats on this side of the House would describe it. I suspect that, when amendments are brought forward and the time comes to vote, that member will stand up and

be counted with the members of this party who intend to oppose this legislation.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) certainly has a flair for the theatre. This is very apropos. It does not surprise me that on the fifth anniversary of the invocation of the War Measures Act, which was last Thursday, the Prime Minister introduced Bill C-73 to control wages and prices in Canada. For the past year, including during the last federal election campaign, the government has been saying that wage and price controls were not workable.

Since the federal campaign of 1974 the former finance minister and an assortment of other ministers have been going around the country laying the blame for inflation on the backs of the workers. They have been saying that it was the workers of Canada, in their exorbitant demands, who have caused inflation in Canada. In addition, their productivity has been criticized. It is said that our workers are not as productive as workers in the United States or in other industrialized countries. The claim was made that the expectations of Canadian workers were out of line, that they wanted the highest wages but were not prepared to work hard to satisfy their expectations.

What was in fact happening was that Canadian workers were responding to spiralling inflation, much of which was precipitated by the government. For example, in the housing field, it was fairly obvious to the most casual observer that land costs were escalating beyond the means of Canadian workers. As far as mortgage interest rates were concerned, they were completely out of whack with what the workers of Canada could afford. The aspiration of a Canadian worker to own a home or a single family dwelling is certainly not out of whack, but lo and behold when he goes to purchase a home the mortgage rate and the payments per month are completely beyond his ability to pay.

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Another area of concern for Canada and the Canadian workman is increased food prices. The government, as a result of rocketing food prices which had no relation to what farmers were getting, established the Food Prices Review Board, and Mrs. Plumtre was named as its chairperson. Many predatory price practices were identified by her posse, including double ticketing and products artificially enhanced by the use of such things as red lights over meat counters, etc., etc. She, apparently, gave the green light to monopoly pricing by large corporations such as the Weston empire, and she also began to attack labour in Canada, completely disregarding the structure of the so-called free enterprise system. With this monopoly pricing the effect of the present anti-combines legislation is as useless as horns on a cow. This is not the first time we in Canada have seen an all-out attack on inflation by the Liberal government.

**An hon. Member:** That shows how much you know about cows.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** I don't know much about bulls either. You will remember that the year was 1971, which was not so long ago, when this government was full of the attack on inflation. We all remember that; it was the first war on inflation. The unemployment rate in Canada at that time