

Anti-Inflation Program

That leaves us wondering about the adequacy of the solutions he puts forward with regard to energy pricing.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): The third matter mentioned by the leader of the NDP was the vexed question of food costs. I have said before, and say again, that probably no transaction made by every Canadian family in the week is more a matter of concern for them than the amount spent at the corner store and the supermarket for the purpose of keeping them in food. I must say, as well, that we acknowledge at once the increase in food prices in Canada has been an important factor in increasing the general price level in this country. What interested me in the speech of the leader of the NDP is that at one point he spoke with accents of admiration about the work of the Food Prices Review Board, and the only criticism he had was that this government had not given to the Food Prices Review Board the power to roll back prices.

Then he went back to the old argument that the reason food prices had gone up in Canada was a higher profit margin being taken by the vendors or the processors of particular foods. I think it is fair to remind him of the speeches he and other members of his group made in one of the two previous debates we have had in the last four weeks on this subject. They said that the Food Prices Review Board had failed in its duty, having examined the facts and found that increases in food prices had not been due to higher profit margins, and they are now saying that the board did a good job and we should be taking action, just as the board recommended, for the purpose of rolling back prices. The leader of the NDP asks why there is not some provision in this particular bill for the kind of scrutiny of food prices as existed with the Food Prices Review Board and, what is more, he said it should have the power to roll back prices. I think it is fair to call the attention of the hon. gentleman to the fact that those powers are in Bill C-73.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): That is why I must agree with the Leader of the Opposition when he referred to this as being a particularly arid exercise—those are not his words, but mine—to be having a debate on an opposition day on this question when the very powers the hon. gentleman says we should have are in fact in a government bill which is before a parliamentary committee at this time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): This is a measure which the hon. gentleman and his colleagues opposed at second reading. He now asks for the powers we have put into this bill for the Anti-Inflation Board, which are those he opposed in his vote at second reading.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I acknowledge that the leader of the NDP has a difficult point to make and a rather difficult brief to carry. He cannot acknowledge the fact that over the past 18 months or two years the government has been making very substantial appropriations of

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

funds and has kept prices down for Canadians with regard to the commodities he referred to, food, housing and energy. He cannot acknowledge the fact that there can be, and is, a problem for the economy as a whole if not only profits and rents but wages and salaries go up, and in that sense he has put himself in a difficult position. While recognizing and having sympathy with the difficulty of the position he is put into, perhaps it is for this reason that most hon. members of the House will not have found his presentation this morning to have been very convincing.

I was interested in his remarks on the question of professional income. I have had occasion to refer to this in the past. He said that in other nations where they have put into effect a prices and incomes system, they have also taken effective measures for the purpose of controlling professional incomes. Let us consider one example. Have they done that in the United Kingdom? After all, with a Labour government, a socialist government under Prime Minister Wilson, in Britain one would assume that if the hon. gentleman were making a reference, he would refer to the spiritual godfathers of the New Democratic Party in Canada. What is the situation? While the socialist government in the United Kingdom has put a £6 per week maximum on the income of the ordinary workingman, it does not control professional incomes at all.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I acknowledge the validity of the point made by the leader of the NDP with regard to the fact that the question of professional incomes is a vexed one for our community, and that while in terms of gross national product the amounts which may be involved are not significant from the standpoint of the test of fairness and equity, it is important that not only should the wage-earning man see that he is being dealt with fairly with regard to his own income, but he should also have the assurance at the same time that the self-employed professional will be controlled.

● (1420)

Indeed, all the ten provincial governments agreed with us in this regard. They also agreed that the best means of doing so—given the fact that those professions are self-governed within each province—was a three-way arrangement with respect to controlling professional incomes. It should be the responsibility of the province, with the professional associations there, to work out an effective limitation on billing practices with the understanding that the federal level would impose a requirement on them to file a statement of professional income and monitor such statements to determine if the income exceeded the guidelines.

As I put the matter to the leader of the New Democratic Party yesterday, this bill provides that while a professional will be entitled to go up to the maximum of \$2,400 on professional services over his present income, he will be subject to the scrutiny of the Anti-Inflation Board, as will everybody else. In the event of an excess, the administrator will be able to take back from him anything over the permitted amount. There can be question of approach and timing such as was raised by the Leader of the Opposition. We may disagree with them, but I think we should be