

Anti-Inflation Act

new society where there is one set of rules for us and another set of rules for the present administration. I think this is morally wrong. I think this more than anything undermines the credibility of the anti-inflation program.

"Do as I say, not as I do" appears to be the creed of the present administration. Surely, Mr. Speaker, this type of thinking is shown up so clearly in the judge's affair that is now before us. What administration at a senior level of government in Canada other than this administration would be allowing cabinet ministers who have acted illegally to carry on in their posts?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

Mr. Paproski: Now take it easy, Marc.

Mr. Lalonde: The hon. member made reference to cabinet ministers who have acted illegally. I think that raises a very fundamental question of privilege. I invite the hon. member to specify which ministers he has in mind, or completely withdraw the charge. I am not raising this question of privilege on a facetious basis, Mr. Speaker; I certainly want a ruling on this.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Withdraw.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) has—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I do not believe the hon. member made any specific charge. He did not name a specific minister.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): It was a broad statement.

Mr. Lalonde: On the question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, by referring to ministers generally the privileges of all ministers of the government are affected. I think the hon. member has made a very serious charge and he should be challenged either to withdraw it or be specific. Certainly I intend to pursue it if the hon. member does not withdraw it.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the hon. minister has raised this point. This is why we want a public inquiry into this affair.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: Let us find out who is right. It is often contended that government spending cannot be cut.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order. The Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Blais).

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I heard the representation made by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde). Evidently the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) is not ready to withdraw. If your Honour is not ready to make a ruling—

Mr. Paproski: He already has.

[Mr. Stevens.]

Mr. Blais:—I hope you will reserve further comment so as to protect the obligation that the minister has to raise his question of privilege at the first opportunity. If the minister wishes to raise the matter further, then at the time he raises it I hope the Chair will take into consideration that the question of privilege has been raised now seriously, that Your Honour has heard him, and would wish to hear further representations.

● (2020)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I would suggest that the hon. member should not impute motives in that way, and that we get back to Bill C-89.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, I was saying it is often contended that government spending cannot be cut. What will be cut—pension payments, welfare assistance, family allowances, or funding of bilingualism? No, these are sacred cows. Surely if you are forced to make hard decisions in your life or in your business to live within the tightness of the guidelines, then why cannot the government face up to the same hard decisions?

You will recall that when Bill C-73 was being passed in this House we moved an amendment that would have required the government to stay within the 8 per cent ceiling as far as its expenditures were concerned in the fiscal year 1977. We were voted down on that measure. I suggest that when we were voted down on that 8 per cent ceiling, the same ceiling the government expects every wage earner in this country to accept, the government showed its true style as far as its intention in respect of restraint is concerned.

The federal government alone now spends more than \$30 billion a year. It is budgeting a 15 per cent increase, or another \$4.5 billion during the next fiscal year. I find it incredible that somewhere in that \$30 billion, somewhere in that \$4.5 billion increase, there is not ample opportunity to make some hard pruning of government spending.

In this connection the insincerity of the federal government's commitment to restraint was made apparent on Tuesday when the administration authorized \$198,000 in spending over what was originally needed or requested for the office of the administrator of the anti-inflation program. During consideration of the Supplementary Estimates (B), Mr. Tansley, the administrator of the program, told opposition questioners that his office required \$100,000 in funds for the remainder of the current 1976 fiscal year. However, the Supplementary Estimates (B) finally requested \$298,000 for his office, making apparent that very little preparation or consultation was given to an excess of \$198,000 over what was originally requested and needed. Mr. Tansley, a \$50,000 a year executive, is indisputably qualified by his training and experience to make such an estimate. In addition, with only 15 days remaining in the fiscal year the possibility of error becomes negligible.

Members of the official opposition attempted to reduce the \$298,000 estimate to the level of what was required. Government members voted the motion down, eight to seven. In doing so the government mocks its own restraint program and is contemptuous of the Canadian people who are trying to make the anti-inflation program work.