

Anti-Inflation Act

Leader of the Opposition will go back and read the record again. He will realize that perhaps he has been less than just in the assertion he made that there had been no early attempt on my part to respond to what the official opposition had said in this regard.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): What had they said in this regard in the debates that had taken place? The Leader of the Opposition has referred to his own participation on October 14 in the special debate. I would quote from page 8199 of *Hansard* when he said that the government should—

—be prepared to make provision for a parliamentary review of the controls and how they are working, providing an opportunity of parliamentary recall, say at the end of 18 months or two years.

The Leader of the Opposition said that he had not seen the bill at that time. He had not been able to formulate a judgment from the white paper, which he had seen at that time, as to what was the appropriate course of action, and it was for that reason that he used those terms on that particular day. Several days later, the hon. member for Peace River had seen the bill, he had been able to study its provisions and to look at the white paper. At that time he spoke in words which were virtually a paraphrase of what his leader had said a few days before. I would refer him to page 8314 of *Hansard* on October 17, where he said:

We will propose an amendment, which will provide that at an earlier date during the life of this legislation, this House will have, as it must, the right to decide whether under the circumstances which then exist the extension of the legislation is warranted.

In the debate which occurred at that time, Madam Speaker, in full knowledge of the bill, full knowledge of the provisions that we have here, and in full knowledge of the white paper, the number two member of the official opposition, undoubtedly speaking on behalf of his party, said they would be coming forward with an amendment; an amendment, may I say, substantially in the terms of the one that I have put forward. He said that they would be proposing an amendment for the purpose of having this kind of consideration. May I remind the House that in response to that particular speech and the passage which I have just read, I said, and I quote myself again at page 8545 of *Hansard*:

For my part I would have no difficulty in accepting an amendment of that kind.

There are going to be some difficulties about this program. There are going to be some difficulties about the impact it will have on the economy and individual groups of Canadians. Let us talk about it in terms of the real problems, however, and not try to create little parliamentary games of quoting here and there and neglecting to quote oneself earlier on or explaining what he really meant at the time he said it, and so on.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): If the Leader of the Opposition wants to change his stance with regard to mandatory controls in Canada, he is entitled to do so. He can dream up phrases—this is undoubtedly the new catch phrase that is going to be used—like “institutionalized process of government intervention”. He can dream up that kind of phrase if

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

he likes, but let us face the fact that whether it will be of value to him politically or not, he is now proposing to change the stance that he took before, and I think the house should recognize that.

The Leader of the Opposition made some reference to the fact of the 18-month period being a matter of principle for them, something that they were absolutely dead set on. I have just read a passage where the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the program ending after 18 months or two years, so there does not seem to have been any magic or principle involved there. Nor earlier did there seem to be any magic or principle involved when the Leader of the Opposition was stumping the country referring to the kind of program that, if elected as prime minister, he would put forward, and the timing of that kind of program.

Mr. Muir: You said it would not work for 90 days.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Thank you for mentioning the 90 days. The Leader of the Opposition proposed to launch an initial freeze for 90 days, followed by the imposition of the mandatory and comprehensive controls for a period of up to 24 months. At that time, Madam Speaker, it seemed to be sound to be talking about 27 months. Where is the great principle involved? Do I detect a kind of quibble, or is this another parliamentary game that is involved here as well? What is now a matter of principle, termination after 18 months, is really at odds with the positions that the Leader of the Opposition had previously taken, which seemed to regard a period of 27 months as the optimum for the operation of the program. To do him justice, shorter if it could be achieved, just as we have said, but to try to set out a substantially longer period under which time the program could be carried into effect.

Mr. Whiteway: Was he right that it would work?

● (1650)

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I think it would be of greater service to Canadians who are interested in this matter if I were to talk about the merits of the program put forward, the kinds of problems we shall face in dealing with it and the kinds of responsibilities which will devolve on the Leader of the Opposition, his followers, and others, in the time the program is outstanding. The hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge (Mr. Saltsman) accurately described parliament's responsibilities for scrutinizing and, indeed, dealing with the program. As I indicated and as is indicated by the record, there will be full opportunity for parliament to debate and make a decision on whether the program, in the words of the hon. member for Peace River, should be extended for a further period of time. We have provided for that kind of extension which, I remind the House, was suggested first by the hon. member for Peace River.

The bill itself requires the Anti-Inflation Board and administrator to report to the minister and for those reports to be tabled in the House. As time goes on and the administration does its work, the detailed operation of the program will come before parliament in the way of information. As I responded to the hon. member for Peace River, who asked a question today, in the statutory instruments committee there will be substantial opportunity to review the regulations as made under this program and