

*Anti-Inflation Act*

people will get a little less of the pie, therefore there ought to be more for them.

Then there is the pressing question of the minimum wage. I realize that this is both a federal and a provincial matter, and I refer again to the excellent speech made yesterday by a Liberal, the hon. member for Maisonneuve-Rosemont, who was quite upset about the action of the Liberal government in his own province. I say that to talk about the right to catch up is meaningless unless you extend that right to those who really need it.

What should be taking place now is not just a flood of oratory by these public relations cabinet ministers who are running around the country but, rather, the bringing in of necessary legislation to increase the minimum wage at the federal level, with a plea to the provinces that they do the same. I suspect that some of the provinces will want to increase their minimum wages and may even want to do so to an extent that will break that \$600 ceiling which applies to those in the lower brackets, and I hope the government will soon say to the provinces that such a ceiling will certainly not apply to those on the minimum wage. As a matter of fact, I think that the \$600 ceiling, which is not in the bill but in the guidelines, should go altogether.

These are the various groups of people. As I say, all of them are at the bottom; for all of them the heart of the Minister of Finance bleeds because he has told us so in the speeches he has made. But it is not good enough just to hope that in an indirect way things will be better for them. Things will be better for them only if positive steps are taken, and that is why I urge that there be positive action to increase the various pensions to which I have referred—old age security, the guaranteed income supplement, war veterans allowance, war disability pension, and so on.

That is why I think legislation regarding Canadians who were prisoners of war at Hong Kong or in Europe should be brought in, and that is why the promise to improve Canadian government annuities should be implemented without delay. That is why I feel things should be done for railway pensioners and for retired public servants, and that is why I believe definite action should be taken with regard to the minimum wage legislation right now, both in Ottawa and in the provinces.

As I have already said, this may sound to some like a speech calling for exceptions to the practice of restraint which is the heart and core of Bill C-73, but I have seldom seen a bill that was so severe and yet so full of exceptions. All over the place there are ways and means by which the ceilings can be pierced, not only in terms of wages but certainly in terms of prices and profits, and many of those exceptions will permit persons in the upper brackets to have increases which are beyond what the guidelines dictate.

I think in particular of professional people and of lawyers who can handle ten cases a day instead of eight. They may not raise their fees, but they can make more money. Doctors who can handle ten cases a day instead of eight, or 20 instead of 15—whatever the ratio may be—may not increase their fees, but they can handle more patients and make more money.

● (1710)

Then there is the excuse that if a person is promoted, he is entitled to an increase in pay regardless of the amount involved. So if there are these exceptions built into this legislation for those at the top, exceptions which I think are unfair, and yet nothing is being done for those at the bottom, in my view the legislation will fail for the simple reason that it lacks the essential of being fair. I urge, therefore, that this be corrected by positive steps right now.

Others on both sides of the House who have spoken in this debate have said that this bill by itself is not enough; there have to be fiscal and monetary policies; there have to be other changes. The whole question of housing has been well put forward by my leader, the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) and by others, and I suggest that it is terribly true when hon. members say that these direct things need to be done if this legislation is to succeed.

The theme of the Minister of Finance throughout his speeches seems to be against the big people. I know this has a very strong appeal from the public platform: that the government is out to get the big people, big business, big labour, and so on, and that if these things are done despite the exceptions there are, life will be better for those at the bottom. In my experience over the last number of months, or perhaps even longer than that the group of people which has been hoping the most that there would be some kind of control has been the pensioners, the older people.

There was not much mail today because of the strike, but the mail I have been receiving in the last week or so from older people expresses concern that here is a program which talks about controls but which has no price control in it at all. They see prices continuing to go up and no increase in their basic income. So as far as they are concerned, they will not receive the benefit they thought would come from a program of economic controls. In their name, I plead, not for rhetoric from the Minister of Finance but for positive steps on behalf of these people.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I began my remarks by referring to a sentence on page 21 of the white paper about groups which have fallen behind, and their right to catch up. At the risk of being unpopular in some quarters in this House, I wish to make passing reference to Bill C-44 which was passed some months ago.

**An hon. Member:** What was that?

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** My hon. friend asks what it was. It was a bill brought in because there were those in this House who thought that Members of Parliament had the right to catch up. It was argued that we had fallen behind financially and that a massive, catch-up increase was justified. What I thought of that bill was pretty well known. My attempt to oppose it and defeat it at every turn is on the record. But I say that this House of Commons, which by a majority supported a measure aimed at enabling us to catch up, cannot keep silent when there is before us legislation and economic controls which do not include an opportunity for those in