



Trudeau tells weeklies

"If 12% is not enough, kiss the economy goodbye"

By H. Coles

Staring Pierre Elliott Trudeau in the eye can be an experience, especially after the PM has faced a crowd of shouting CUPE workers, violently opposed to his recently-announced economic guidelines for Canada.

But for a group of weekly newspaper editors, reporters and publishers including this writer who attended a special session at the Royal York in Toronto last Friday afternoon, it was an opportunity to ask questions about the controversial guidelines in a sensible, orderly manner without the interruption of demonstrations.

Trudeau, dressed in a

grey-striped suit with a rose in his lapel, so unaffected by the preceding demonstration. He faced the crusty, often conservative publishers and editors, with sweet reason in his voice and a soft sell in his speech that left them convinced he meant what he said about enforcing guidelines. However, the government hoped to get the cooperation of the public in beating inflation with a nationwide attack to preserve the value of the Canadian dollar.

"This was no shrug. It's a crusade."

It was man-to-man and man-to-woman talk that did little to ease the anxiety about controls but left no doubt he

and the Government would have preferred to take some other avenue to solvency. Trudeau said he didn't like controls and did not want them, but increasing clamor to meet what he admitted could be inflationary crisis had forced the Government to act.

The controls, he said, were now limited, but if the public did not respond, more restrictive controls would follow to ensure the inflation dragon is pinned by the controls lance.

The session was thrown open to questions from the start and it took little time for Dr. Johnson of the Port Hope Evening Guide, a former national director of the PC party, to display a photo-print of the front page of his next day's edition which boldly proclaimed a \$9,500 increase for the director of education in Northumberland county.

Would such an increase be allowed?

The PM said the increase was far above the \$2,400 allowed in the guidelines but rather than disallowing the raise the individual would simply be taxed to the point where such a raise would mean little.

No, he said, there were no countries where controls similar to Canada's were being applied and working, but the Government hoped to forge fair legislation to ensure they worked. The resolution was unmistakable. Gesturing with both hands, Trudeau noted his preference for self-discipline but in the absence of individual restraint the Government really had no choice.

He noted there had been a strong call for leadership in this matter. Now some of the same voices calling for it were changing their tune and deploring government intervention into their affairs.

The prime minister told the weekly newspaper people how he attempted discussion with one picketer who hollered against control of wages. "You're allowed up to a 12 per cent increase. How much do you want?" he asked. "More" was the reply. "How much more?" the PM enquired.

"Just more," the picketer

said.

That's an example of restraint in Canada now, said Trudeau. His Government aims to prevent inflation swelling to 14, 16 or 20 per cent.

"If 12 per cent is not enough you can kiss the economy goodbye," he intoned solemnly.

He brightened when he told an interested audience that controls did not mean Canadians would be poorer. He thought the guide lines would strengthen the Canadian dollar and make it possible to buy more with it.

"We have to bring sanity back into the economy," he declared resolutely.

Doubts expressed about events after controls were lifted especially where unions might seek to gain lost ground, prompted the PM to note they would be imposed for three years and would likely stay until society is ready to apply self-discipline.

The PM promised there would be no army of bureaucrats to implement the scheme. Checks by the Department of Revenue and a few employees should carry it off without many employees. But he wagged his finger and warned an army of bureaucrats would be hired to make it work if necessary. Tough talk to the weekly press but there seemed to be a feeling that Trudeau was calling for a national crusade to save the dollar. The reception was good, especially the call for old values.

Trudeau said people feel they are subject to blind forces and this leads them to try to get what they can to protect themselves against the ravages of further inflation.

Do we want to live in a jungle where the strongest prevail? The PM asked philosophically if we are not here to help each other and benefit from each other, why live together?

If he attempted discussion the poor but at the same time would discourage profit-

ering by the affluent and large companies.

But, wondered one editor, don't the people receiving old age pensions need increases in dividend cheques that would be effectively choked? Trudeau replied there could be no increase in dividends because of lesser corporation profits.

The weekly press politely clapped when an aide summoned Mr. Trudeau to a telephone when he was told Postmaster General Bryce Mackasey had just collapsed in his office from strain caused by the postal strike.

Trudeau strode calmly off but one wondered what was going through the mind of the man at the helm of this country as problems multiply.

Our problems are his problems. And to hear him explain it his problems are also ours.

Ontario Weekly Newspaper Association president Jim Dills of Milton, introduced Mr. Trudeau and chaired the press conference.

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"Self-discipline is the best"

Strike selves out of work?

Postal workers now on strike could strike themselves out of a job, according to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. Speaking before a press conference arranged for Ontario weekly newspapers in Toronto Friday, the Prime Minister said that continuing strikes could destroy the function of the Post Office.

"More and more private business is seeking alternatives to the post office to deliver mail and goods because they cannot rely on the Post Office. They could strike themselves out of a job. The workers have to realize this."

Trudeau was responding to a question from a reporter who wondered if some other way might be found to move the mail during the strike. He wondered if the army might be called in to move the mail.

Could "buy" peace

The PM acknowledged that the government could buy peace (if it is peace) at any cost, but he told reporters that both he and Bryce Mackasey, Post Master General, had made it clear the government wasn't willing to go over the 38 per cent offered when negotiations broke down.

"I'm hoping for support from the Canadian public. I know it is inconvenient for the public and for the weeklies."

Commenting on the possibility of ordering postal workers back to work, he said he was reluctant to do that for two reasons.

"First, you could find a situation where thousands disobeyed it and the jails would be filled in no time."

He pointed out that forcing people back to work could be a questionable move when millions of dollars of machinery is involved.

"At some point in time though, the freedom to strike must give way to the authority of the state and liberties must be taken away."

He said that in the past eight years the government had intervened in strikes on six or seven occasions. "I don't like to do this."

Within minutes of having made that statement an aide advised Trudeau that Postmaster General Mackasey had collapsed from fatigue and exhaustion. Mr. Mackasey is the central figure in the negotiations between the government and the striking postal workers.



"I don't like price and wage controls either."



"I'm hoping for support from the public."

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The committee looked over the poles during its recent fall tour of the town but there was some question at the time as to who should paint the metal poles.

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