

Reed's report from Queen's Park

By JULIAN REED, MPP
Halton-Burlington
ECONOMIC
CONDITIONS

Liberal Leader David Peterson recently stated his views on the controversial question of wage and price controls, aware that "every serious minded citizen across this province and this country is deeply concerned about our current economic conditions".

"There are," he said, "no simple or fool-proof answers to the problems of high unemployment...inflation...interest rates and low productivity... never before has Ontario been in such dire need of strong leadership from its provincial government to put us back on the road to economic recovery."

"It has been my fervent hope that we would be forging a provincial, inter-provincial and national consensus in response to the challenges which presently beset us... Ontario is Canada's manufacturing heartland, its historic economic foundation: it is not only in our vital interest but it is our basic responsibility that Ontario be at the forefront of the national debate on our economic recovery strategy."

"I believe the time has come for cross-the-board wage and price controls. No single sector can be singled out to bear the sacrifice we must all undertake. Equity demands that wage controls be implemented across all sectors, and these must be coupled with corresponding price controls."

"No one can guarantee that a wage and price control program, of whatever shape or form, will be entirely equitable or fair. Nevertheless, we must ensure that those at the lower end of the income scale do not bear a disproportionate burden...the elderly, single family supporters, who must devote a far greater share of their income to the necessities of food and shelter. I propose that a wage control program be administered according to a sliding scale, whereby those at the lower income range are allowed a larger percentage increase in wages than those at the higher income level."

"I would not want to delude anyone into thinking that a wage and price controls program is the panacea for our economic woes. It is a step, an

important step, yet it can only serve as one part of a total economic recovery package. Wage and price controls can restore con-



JULIAN REED

sumer and business confidence in the short-term by providing a climate of optimism, by breaking the inflationary spiral and protecting jobs here in Ontario for our citizens. Indeed, these achievements by themselves would be a significant factor in the recovery from the current recession.

"Our last experience with wage and price controls in this country has taught us a vital lesson: we must use this period to lay the groundwork for fundamental changes in our economic structures.

Our major emphasis must be in the field of employment.

"We must make our industries internationally competitive again. Over the last few years, we have been losing ground to foreign competitors, both in terms of our export market and our domestic market...We must encourage investment in the new technologies and assist in the revitalization of the old. You are all aware that our country has a pitiable record in terms of its investment in research and development. The provincial government can change our performance in this regard through investment incentives and co-operative ventures.

"We must tackle the problem of the shortage of skilled manpower, and the misallocation of human resources. Through job training and job retraining programs, we can ensure that we have the appropriate skilled workforce pool in place to draw upon as we enter the new economic age of high-technology.

"We must promote a more enlightened labour-management relationship. We have ignored the

commonality of interests we share as Ontarians. We can build on that strength. The provincial government can provide leadership in assisting management and labour to recognize those areas

where co-operation is obviously mutually beneficial, and perhaps reduce those instances where conflict has become second nature. It is more and more apparent that the issue of productivity

is one which can only be addressed by a common front involving labour and management."

In conclusion, Mr. Peterson urged the government to implement clear restraint on all

public and para-public wages and prices, mentioned the special need for restraint by Ontario Hydro, and called upon Premier Davis to reconvene the legislature immediately.

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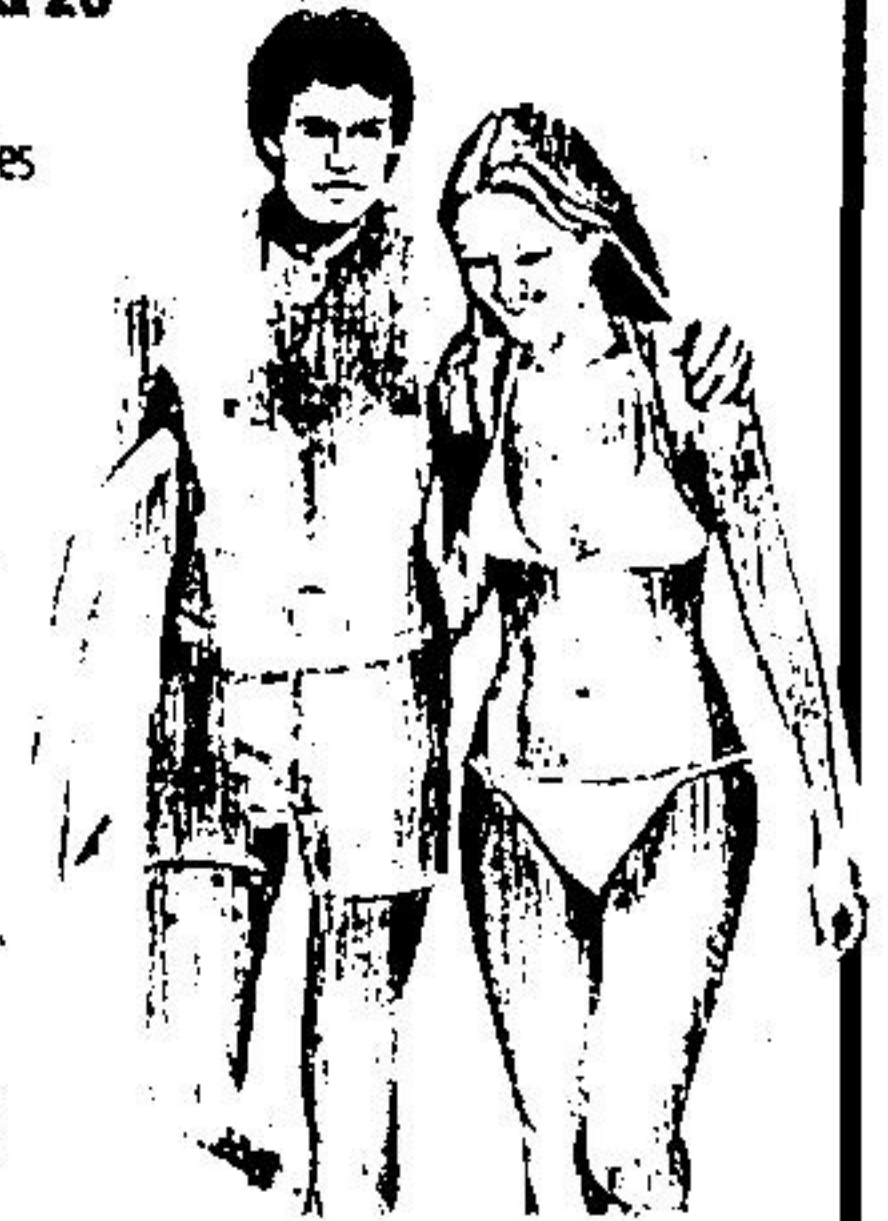
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