

Supply—Consumer and Corporate Affairs

group had had some effect on the government. The Prime Minister referred to some sort of board, agency, committee or what have you which will inquire into how economic decisions are made to increase incomes and prices. Of course, when the government talks of prices and costs it carefully does not use the word "profits". I have yet to hear a member of the government speak about profits or excess profits in this connection. It is in this area, though, that the new agency ought to inquire. Profits must be included as a cost to consumers. I submit that the consumer has the right to determine how much profit he is willing to pay on any commodity. Only when the board or agency the Prime Minister envisaged is capable of operating in this field will we be in a position to control the cost of living. I say this because farther on the Prime Minister said:

We shall also, Mr. Speaker, take carefully into account any views on this proposal expressed in parliament.

We think that this is a good move. But we think the matter should be pursued and made concrete since at present we do not know whether the government is thinking of a board, agency or commission. At any rate, the germ of the thought is there. I urge the minister concerned to let the germ grow and to bring it to fruition.

Everything I have said so far applies generally to all of Canada. Yet there is one group which, because of its geographic position in the country, suffers more from high prices than the rest. I refer to those in the far northern parts. The farther north we go the more expensive it is to live. I come from a northern Ontario town. It is not in the extreme north but it costs us more to live than it costs the people of Toronto. A short time ago when I was on the Sudbury city council we were discussing the high cost of building materials in the city. We found that a square of shingles—

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his allotted time has expired.

An hon. Member: Go ahead.

Mr. Habel: No, no. That is enough.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Does the committee give unanimous consent for the hon. member to continue?

Mr. Habel: No, no. That is enough.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[Mr. Germa.]

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: The hon. member for Sudbury.

Mr. Germa: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will not be very long.

Mr. McLean (Charlotte): Will the hon. member permit a question? Does he say that the consumer ought to control the price of butter, eggs, milk and other farm produce?

Mr. Germa: Through an agency or a review board we could determine whether a given commodity was being sold at a fair price, whether the producer was receiving a fair return on his investment or whether the consumer was being hoodwinked. There ought to be some relation between the price of an article and its cost of production. In the open market we do not find that. The law of supply and demand is abrogated by the monopoly positions of various corporations and as a result we see goods being sold at prices which bear no relation to their costs of production.

I was talking about the problems of northern areas. The Sudbury city council learned that a square of shingles cost \$1.50 more in Timmins than in North Bay. We also found that it cost 50 cents to transport a square of shingles from North Bay to Timmins. Of course, when inquiries about high prices were made we were fobbed off with the excuse, "Oh, well, it is the high cost of transportation that has been increasing the cost of your building materials." That was not so.

In Thompson, Manitoba, which is in the far north about 400 air miles dead north of Winnipeg, the average employee works at his job for about 17 days. This represents an inordinately high employee turnover and I wondered why a man would go 400 miles north into the wilderness, work for 17 days and then quit. We have half a million unemployed in Canada and yet this situation prevails in the north. On investigating, and after receiving letters from the president of the United Steel Workers, I learned that men will not stay in the far north because the cost of living is very high. I think the minister ought to intervene on behalf of these far northern people. Our men need jobs. They are willing to go into the north country because that is where our future lies. Yet they cannot make a go of it because of the increasing pressure they encounter from high living costs.

Among 500 construction workers in Thompson the average employment period is 17 days. Among the permanent employees of the mine the average rate of turnover is 85 per