

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 30, 1975

The House met at 11 a.m.

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

### FOOD PRICES

REQUEST THAT MORE UP TO DATE PRICE INDEX BE  
PUBLISHED BY STATISTICS CANADA—GOVERNMENT ACTION

**Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, in view of the shockingly bad attendance on the ministerial benches because of 'flu or Friday—

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** Your benches are not exactly crowded. It is not exactly standing room only over there.

**Mr. Baldwin:** —on the ministerial benches by people who have a duty to be there—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**An hon. Member:** Twenty-three Tories in the House right now!

**Mr. Baldwin:** —I should like to address this question to the Acting Prime Minister, the compendium of all knowledge.

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

**Mr. Dinsdale:** Take it easy.

**Mr. Drury:** The first sensible word you have uttered so far.

**Mr. Baldwin:** In the last few weeks, Canadians have become increasingly aware of the tainted meat issue. It now appears they are being faced with tainted statistics. In the light of the fact that the average housewife sees her food cost rising at a far greater rate than portrayed by Statistics Canada, will the minister instruct Statistics Canada to consult with the Food Prices Review Board and together establish a food index which more accurately illustrates the rising food prices for the average Canadian family?

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** In case the interjections did not get on the record, may I say there are a number of ministers away today on official business. I hope there are enough Tories on the other side to ask sufficient questions.

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** Only 23 present!

**Mr. Sharp:** Since there are only 23 of them here, I am afraid they will have to double up to meet their responsibilities.

The Bureau of Statistics does expect to list a representative basket of food items on the basis of which to make its calculations. This is always subject to review, and I am sure the bureau has been reviewing the situation constantly. This has been its practice in the past and I am sure it will be in the future.

**Mr. Baldwin:** In the light of the fact that all indicators point to a substantial increase in food prices in the next few months, and since the Statistics Canada survey of prices is about two months old, would the minister instruct Statistics Canada to improve and speed up its procedures so Canadian housewives can be provided with accurate and up to date information?

**Mr. Sharp:** These are very difficult statistical problems. I believe our index of consumer prices is a reasonably good one. Though I do not think the Bureau of Statistics would claim it is representative of every family, it represents an attempt to achieve an average. I do not think there is any need to issue any such instruction to the bureau as the hon. member has suggested. They are certainly concerned about their professional competence.

SUGGESTED PUBLICATION BY FOOD PRICES REVIEW BOARD  
OF MONITORING FOOD BASKETS IN TWELVE CITIES

**Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River):** My request was with regard to time. The minister might bear that in mind. I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In light of the moderating effect that the publication of the results of the monitoring of certain food baskets by the Food Prices Review Board has had in Ottawa, would the minister instruct the Food Prices Review Board to publish similar statistics for the 12 cities they are already monitoring?

• (1110)

[Translation]

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I shall take up the matter with the president of the commission.