

you raise the price of wheat to the flour miller so that bread is cheaper, that is not at the cost of the government or the taxpayer; it is at the cost of western producers. When you try to control the price of meat by taking off the 3 per cent tariff on American beef coming into the country, the person who is going to pay, pay, pay is the primary producer, not the consumer.

This government blithely says that it is going to create an atmosphere which will encourage production. It is not enough for the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whellan) to get up and glibly repeat, "I am for the farmer." That is conversation. Let him influence this government to implement policies that will help the primary producer, then I will believe that he is for the farmer.

● (2150)

Only one thing will bring about increased production of food in this country, and that is profit to the primary producer. If you want to impose selective controls on farm produce available to the consumer, as you have done with bread and milk and tried to do with beef, you must control input costs. Under the present government, input costs are rising at the tremendous rate of 13 per cent per year. Yes, 13 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Farmers' incomes, despite what they are receiving today, are not rising to that degree.

What the consumer who is concerned about the high cost of living and the high cost of food today does not know is that the young fellow who is standing at the edge of the counter where one pays for groceries and is putting parcels into bags for customers, who has no responsibility, is working eight hours a day and is probably taking home more pay today than 40 per cent of the primary producers in agriculture despite all their investment and labour. That is the terrible situation we face today. This government says what it wants to do to encourage the production of food in this country. Let it introduce legislation that will give the farmer the opportunity to produce. After all, the farmer must pay the increased interest rates this government has allowed; he must pay the increased building costs this government has allowed. Thus, the farmer must pay increased costs for fertilizer, farm machinery, cattle, seed, chemicals and all manner of items. It is the primary producer who must pay these costs, and under these circumstances he cannot survive. It is time the government found this out.

It is not good enough for this government to say blithely, "We accept the recommendation that says there ought to be a scheme in this country to encourage the production of food." You cannot say that in one breath and then impose controls at the retail level on farm produce. It is ridiculous for the government to criticize us for advocating price controls when it is initiating the same thing on a selective basis and hoping the people of Canada do not realize what it is doing.

I know the NDP are as serious as anyone in this House about trying to control the cost of living. They seem to place all their confidence on the Prices Review Board. I submit it will not solve the problem of high food costs. When we talk about rolling back the prices of food items in this country, do they not realize there are over 14,000 items of food? How can one police any roll-back, let alone enforce it? They base their whole case in the fight against

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inflation on the high cost of advertising, on the taking of excess profits in the handling of food and in the gouging of the public. Mr. Speaker, these could be contributing factors but they are minor factors in relation to the basic problems that are causing inflated food prices in Canada.

The problem we face in parliament is this: this government is desperately trying patch-up policies and is going from panic to panic as consumers point them out, instead of taking the necessary monetary and fiscal steps and adopting the necessary policies in order to control and fight inflation. When government members stand in their place and say the only reason food prices are so high is that we cannot control them, that is not good enough for me, my colleagues or the people of Canada. Saying that there has been destruction of crops, a storm in some other country, or that some other country is suffering from scarcities of foodstuffs for some reason or another and "We know it is bad here but it is not half as bad as in some other countries" is not good enough.

This debate was brought on in order to give the government an opportunity to send this matter back to the committee. We want to deal with this question on the basis of today's facts. I hope the government will accept the hon. member's motion.

**Some hon. Members:** Question.

**Mr. Jim Fleming (York West):** Mr. Speaker, if hon. members have any questions after I have finished my remarks, I shall certainly entertain them. I have done a great deal of preparation on this subject and it is most unfortunate that, as we are close to ten o'clock, I will not have the opportunity to mention several things that I wanted to mention. In the time available, with the same courtesy on the part of opposition members that I have tried to extend to them during past months, I will try to make one or two points.

One of the major things we have been attacked on over the months is that the government has failed to get at the sources of inflation.

**An hon. Member:** It sure has.

**Mr. Fleming:** I should like again—

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

**Mr. Fleming:** I am hoping that someone on the other side of the House will tell me, either inside or outside the House, how we can tell the Japanese that pork is poisonous and how we can tell Europeans that beef is unhealthy. How can we tell God to give us better weather? How can we tell the farmer that he does not deserve a better price, or how do we tell the worker that he cannot fight for better wages?

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

**Mr. Fleming:** This is too bad, Mr. Speaker. I have seen this attitude developing over many months. Sometimes we get heated; sometimes the opposition becomes heated. That is fair enough. Surely, however, we extend courtesy in this House so that when someone is trying to make a point on behalf of his constituents, he is allowed to do it.