

Canadian public aware of the best buying methods, the quality purchases and how to detect deceitful advertising and packaging. Evidence has shown that the consumer has paid excessive prices for nationally advertised foods, compared with company brands which are of the same quality and content. I mention only the wide spread of prices paid on coffee, soaps and cereals between nationally advertised brands and company brands to prove this point.

Fourth, there should be legislation regulating exotic advertising in business. The public are fed up with this expensive nonsense. They want value, not deception. The government should also take a hard look at our tax laws to find ways of imposing restrictions on the amounts spent on such advertising.

Fifth, there should be legislation concerning the standardization of weights and the removal of coaxing labels. The consumer has difficulty in determining how much he is buying and whether the price is reasonable or deceptive. Standardization would protect the consumer and would inform him as to how much he was getting for the price paid.

Mr. Speaker, these are at least five measures to which the government could give immediate attention so as to convince the chain store operators that it intends to protect the public from the high food costs to which they have been subjected and to assure them of protection in the future.

**Hon. J. J. Greene (Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister asked me to speak on this matter no doubt because he felt I was closer to the housewives than any other member of the cabinet. I am therefore very pleased to answer the hon. member to the best of my ability.

First of all let me say I was a little alarmed at the suggestion of the hon. member with respect to a prices review board. I do not quite know what this means. If it involves the question of price fixing, I do not believe it would be consonant with the philosophy of the party which I have the honour to represent. I would think that price fixing would also involve wage fixing, and I do not know whether the party of the hon. gentleman subscribes to this as does the socialist party of England, but it certainly does not conform with the freedom of price and wage structure which is consonant with the philosophy of our party.

**Mr. Knowles:** Reviewing prices does not mean fixing.

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**Mr. Greene:** There is not much point in reviewing if you do not do anything about it.

**Mr. Knowles:** At least you know who is gyping the public.

**Mr. Greene:** I might point out that the housewives boycott has in my view been extremely useful. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp), as we have often heard, is very concerned about the question of inflation. I think the government has taken positive and useful steps in this direction, and certainly the housewives of this country are doing their part in the very keen search into the price structure of food with respect to the war against inflation, and I commend them for it. I think they are giving leadership in the fight against inflation which is being led by our Minister of Finance.

I might point out that my department is concerned in this regard. I think it was five years ago that some 58 per cent of the consumer food dollar went to the farmer. Today only 41 per cent of the consumer food dollar goes to the farmer and the 17 per cent discrepancy is taken up in the cost of packaging, sales, retail distribution, etc. I cannot but have concern for this because it seems to me that, apart from the inflationary trend, the higher the percentage of the consumer's food dollar that goes to the farmer, the better it is for the agricultural community. I would also suggest that this contributes to an efficient economy in that there are no hidden charges or wasted costs in between.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret):** I regret to have to interrupt the hon. gentleman but the time allotted to his speech has expired.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE—INQUIRY AS TO  
EXTENSION OF APPLICATION OF  
CLEMENCY

**Mr. Ralph Cowan (York-Humber):** Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I felt compelled to ask a question of the Solicitor General (Mr. Pennell) in view of the action of the cabinet in commuting the sentences of wilful murderers when they have been sentenced to be executed for their crimes, and in commuting them without exception, whether or not there was a recommendation of mercy from a jury. My question is: Why was the cabinet so merciful to only one class of criminal? Why could they not consider extending mercy to those who might be convicted of theft, arson or contempt of court?