

*Increased Cost of Living*

pared to accept this tremendous increase in the cost of living. They seemed prepared to accept inflation as a Canadian way of life and as something that was unavoidable. The only solution they put forward, each in his own way, was to give more Canadian tax dollars to an ever-increasing number of Canadians who find that they cannot survive under this government's economic program. This is what will cripple this country. This is what will cripple the New Democratic Party, because their basic support is from the labourers of this country who are the middle income earners. This is the very group which this government is carefully placing as the main target for taxation in its tax reform bill. This is what we are up against. This is what is happening in this country today.

Now, I should like to say what else, in my considered opinion, is confusing the Canadian people. I refer to the statements by the ministers of this government as they travel across this country. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) tells the farmers what they like to hear. He is saying that food in Canada today is a bargain. He is saying that food prices are not too high and no doubt will go even higher. The farmers of this country have to work in close co-operation with the consumers of this country, and I say that in making such statements the minister causes divisiveness between two groups which may be irreparable. He gives the consumers of this nation the impression that the prices they pay in the food stores are the prices the primary producers receive, but there is a great difference between the two. The farmers are not having it that great. The farmers also are consumers.

One of the greatest problems facing farmers is that their input costs today are rising at a greater rate than their selling prices despite the increasing price of food. As soon as the present inventories that the agricultural producers of this country have, which were produced at lower cost levels, are exhausted, the farmers will not be receiving the high income it is alleged they are receiving at the present time.

Then, we have the minister who represents a riding adjacent to mine. He is a neighbour of mine and is a man for whom I have the greatest respect. What did he say? He said that food prices are too high. One minister says they are too high and another minister says that they are not too high. This minister not only says that they are too high but that, because of its great concern, the government set up a special parliamentary committee for the prime purpose of studying the trend in food prices and ascertaining why they are so high. The purpose of this committee was to bring in a recommendation, and it recommended the establishment of a committee to control food prices and, if necessary, roll them back. One minister says the prices are not high enough and another minister has a policy to roll them back.

So, we go to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the leader of this party. What does the Prime Minister say? He says there is no cause yet for alarm, that he does not consider there is any crisis yet. As a matter of fact, he believes there is no need for a contingency measure at this time, although we have had the greatest increase in food prices the consumers of this country have experienced. How can the people of this nation know what the government proposes? They are utterly confused. Perhaps they

[Mr. Danforth.]

could accept the suggestion of the New Democratic Party and the Liberal party that we must accept the high cost of living. Maybe the people of Canada could accept this proposition if they knew how high prices would rise. But, Mr. Speaker, from the gravest experiences over the past months, even after the Prime Minister said inflation was licked, people know that it has continued at an ever-increasing rate. What makes me discouraged and alarmed is that the Minister of Agriculture, on behalf of the government, says that food is a bargain in this country. He does not tell the people of Canada that under Liberal administration the dollar has dropped in purchasing power from 100 cents to 69 cents. Not only is the government responsible for the increase in the cost of food, but for a 30 per cent devaluation of the Canadian dollar.

● (1730)

These are the problems we are concerned with when we say there should be some form of income control. It may be all right for various political parties to say, for various reasons, that there should be no control on wages. But talk to the men who are working and earning wages and you will find they are perfectly prepared to accept control if there is also control on the goods and services they purchase. Their constant demand for wage increases is because the dollar is going down in value and the cost of the things they buy is increasing.

I would like to deal with the Minister of Agriculture who speaks on behalf of Canadian farmers. I have the greatest respect for him as an individual, as a farmer and as a gentleman, but I cannot say that of him as a member of the government. Why can't I? It is because he says that food prices are still too low, that they should go up, and that farmers need more for their produce. But at the same time he supported wholeheartedly the budget introduced by the Minister of Finance which removed the tariff on imported food, the purpose of which was to reduce the price of food in Canada, and thereby reduced the price received by the very farmers he is championing.

The Minister of Agriculture goes around the country and says, "Grow more. Produce more. Get with it." At the same time he wholeheartedly supports marketing schemes proposed by the government the sole purpose of which is to control supply, to put quotas on production, to introduce supply management and government-regulated prices. You cannot have it both ways, Mr. Speaker, but that is what this minister is doing. What else is he doing? He is one of those who say that if you want to get ahead as a farmer in Canada, you have to produce, you have to increase efficiency, you have to get with it. But he supported a government which paid people not to grow grain. He supported a government which butchered hundreds of thousands of chickens to prevent them laying eggs.

He is the same minister who supported the national dairy marketing scheme and set it up as a model, the very purpose of which was to allocate dairy quotas to such a degree that for the first time in Canadian history we became importers of dairy products rather than exporters. This is the minister who gets up on a public platform and says, "Grow more. Produce more," but then comes into this House and supports every single measure to reduce the production of farmers and to reduce their incomes.