

There are two issues before the House and before the country. One is the proposal contained in the committee's report, and the other is the suggestion that the committee should ask the House to recommend wider terms, including the provisions in the original terms of reference and all factors which are involved in the trends in food prices.

I think the country needs, the House needs, and even Your Honour needs, to have the House give a clear decision on this issue. I am sure Your Honour would like to know what this House feels about it and I think, under the circumstances, would accept the fact that silence is acquiescence and is, in effect, a demand that the House should have this opportunity. I could argue the technical aspects of this matter, but I would rather leave it at that for the time being.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise for only half a minute to explain my silence. When we arranged for this two-hour debate tonight, one of the things I agreed to was not to waste any time on a procedural argument even if an amendment were moved. That is the reason for my silence. I accept the views Your Honour has expressed, and if you were to ask the unanimous consent of the House to debate an amendment which is clearly out of order, I would have to say no.

Mr. Lawrence: Are you open now, Your Honour, for argument on—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to hon. members that in view of the fact there is agreement, we should try to complete the debate and it might be better that we do not hear further argument. I had the feeling that the amendment was out of order. It was a gallant attempt to introduce an entirely new question. There might be another opportunity for the House to consider it, and there might be a division at that time. I suggest that hon. members be satisfied with dividing on the main question, which is the one which will be put to the House at ten o'clock.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I deliberately withheld making the argument that I thought I should make. I made it quite plain that I was anticipating, by the silence expressed, that there would be acceptance of the procedure. I know there is very little silence. There is so much for the other side to be silent about, but they do not often take the opportunity, especially when they are answering questions.

Let me put this to the House: Is there not the possibility that when this House considers a report of a committee, it could recommend that the committee take it back and ask for wider terms of reference? That is what it amounts to. The original terms of reference stem from the House; the House is the repository of the authority. It has been suggested by a motion—I want to emphasize this to Your Honour and to members of this House—that all the factors involved in the trends in food prices be examined. Surely the question of wages, the question of transportation costs and every factor which is involved in any way in the question of the cost of food should be considered.

What my hon. friend has done in this admirable motion is to say to the committee, "Take it back and review what you have done. Then ask the House to give you terms of

Food Prices

reference which cover all the aspects, every concept, every element involved in the question of food prices. Do what you should do. Do what the House should have done in the first place".

I hear some rude noises from the other side, Mr. Speaker. I know that hon. members opposite are afraid to face this issue. They do not have the intestinal fortitude to stand up and vote on this issue. We think the country demands that this opportunity be given their representatives in the House of Commons to divide on the issue, and we think the committee should ask the House for wider terms of reference.

Some hon. Members: Hear,hear!

Mr. Speaker: I would indicate to hon. members that if they want to have argument after a ruling has been given, then perhaps we will have to hear argument from all sides, not only from the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) and the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence). But I realize that would be somewhat irregular. There is an hour before the vote, and if hon. members want to spend it in argument after a decision has been rendered, then that is their decision.

I appreciate the point made by the hon. member for Peace River. I think that is one of the arguments which could have been submitted in support of the amendment proposed by the hon. member, but he himself recognizes that what he has put before the House is a new term of reference and, therefore, a new question. Certainly, the House is entitled to consider a new question. However, if it is a substantive motion which is proposed by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham, then he has to satisfy the other requirement of the Standing Orders, which is that 48 hours' notice of any new question or new motion shall be given unless the motion is proposed under the terms of Standing Order 43 and there is unanimous consent. That is why I asked if there might be unanimous consent to consider the motion, and apparently there was not.

For all these reasons, I would think it is not possible to accept a motion which in my view is clearly irregular, although I recognize well-intended, and a motion on which there might be a desire to divide. But I suggest, again, that perhaps that division should be limited to the main question. I believe there was also agreement among hon. members as to the order of speakers. I believe the agreement was that the next speaker would be the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore (Mr. Grier).

Mr. Terry Grier (Toronto-Lakeshore): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the motion of concurrence in the committee report and urge all hon. members to do likewise. The issue before us and before the committee has been a difficult, a complicated and multi-faceted problem, but I believe a start has been made toward its solution in this report. I say that partly because the report embraces the concept of a food prices review board. I recognize that in the recommendation of the report that board is to focus on the problem of food and I make no apology for supporting it on those grounds. The people of Canada have made it clear that while their concern ranges wider than the price of