

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I think the hon. member for Saint-Michel (Miss Bégin) is rising on a point of order.

[Translation]

**Miss Bégin:** Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member allow me to put a question?

[English]

**Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway):** Perhaps the hon. member can ask her question at the end of my speech, because I do not have very much time.

**Miss Bégin:** Mr. Speaker, I merely want to know where we grow sugar and how much we grow in Canada.

**Mr. Peters:** We grow quite a bit.

**Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway):** Please do not hold me up. That brings me to something I forgot to mention in connection with sugar. I think this government should take the initiative in renewing the international sugar agreement which lapsed in 1971. We need international planning in the field of sugar so that the consumers of this country will be protected.

**Mr. Prud'homme:** Has the hon. member forgotten anything else?

**Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway):** Please do not remind me of anything else; I do not have very much time. First, we need a Food Prices Review Board with power to act and power to apply selective controls on the basis of nutritional need. That means a subsidy where necessary and justified. I am thinking of bread and milk. If such a policy is to be adopted, it means there would need to be a two-price system for certain commodities, such as there is in the case of wheat. There would need to be export controls for other things, such as have been imposed with regard to oil. Do not say this cannot be done. It has been done. It will mean rollbacks in price. The price of bread should be rolled back without further fuss, in view of what the minister and the Food Prices Review Board have found.

Second, the government ought to pass legislation giving the Food Prices Review Board power to compel the books of the big food chains and other parts of the food distribution system to be opened. The board should have power to lay bare the industrial and financial connections of the food chains. Do not tell me we will not find anything, when George Weston profits in 1973, over 1972, were up 86 per cent, when the profits of Canada Packers in a 39-week period were up 36 per cent, and when the profits of B.C. Packers for a 24-week period last year were up by 124 per cent. We will find something, without any doubt.

Third, we need court action where indicated. I am glad that at the request of the federal government the Alberta Supreme Court has prevented Canada Safeway Limited, which is completely under American ownership and control, from acquiring many more stores in Calgary in the next few years. The court has limited very rigorously the number of stores that chain will be able to build and the restrictions it can impose on competitors. I am glad this has been done. We need more initiatives like that.

*The Address—Mr. Whittaker*

Fourth, the government should consider imposing an excess profits tax on any sector of the food industry where it is found, after investigation, that such a tax is warranted. Fifth, as I have mentioned before, the government should take the initiative in bringing about international agreements. I am thinking not only of sugar. We need an international grains agreement again so that the consumer as well as the farmer can benefit.

Sixth, we need to consider alternative approaches to merchandising. We need to encourage the formation of co-operatives as one means of standing up to the big giants and other merchandisers. We need to do a lot of these things, Mr. Speaker. Mistakes, no doubt big ones, will be made if we go along this way. But we need to do something along these lines. We can make only one unforgivable mistake, the mistake of not trying.

These problems will not go away. Consumers cannot be fobbed off with talk. I wish the government would realize that consumers know the Food Prices Review Board as presently constituted is as a weak reed in a violent storm. That is all it is. They also know that the Food Prices Review Board is a toothless wonder and that it is not effective in the field of the cost of living. My remarks are directed primarily to the subject of food prices because high food prices are the biggest single problem facing Canadian consumers at this time. Why do I mention food? You must begin somewhere, and all of us must eat in order to survive. That is why I have begun by dealing with food.

In conclusion, let me say that although the Prime Minister in the Speech from the Throne outlined all sorts of beautiful things and talked in a tough voice about protecting the consumer, my party is going to have its work cut out this session to make the Prime Minister and the government come through with regard to the programs I have outlined, just as we had our work cut out in the previous session to make them come through with pensions and other things which the people of this country needed. We are going to do it. The matter of food prices is an unfinished piece of business so far as I am concerned, and I warn the government that we are going to do our utmost to make them come through and fulfil their promises to protect both the producer and the consumer in the field of food.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The Chair will see the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary (Mr. Whittaker) when the House resumes at eight o'clock. It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

**AFTER RECESS**

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

**Mr. G. H. Whittaker (Okanagan Boundary):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure this evening to enter into the debate on the Speech from the Throne, especially being the first of the official opposition from the great western province of British Columbia to do so.