

THIRD REPORT OF JOINT COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Mr. Croll tabled the third report of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Consumer Credit and Cost of Living.

He said: Honourable senators, may I ask the indulgence of the Senate. This is an interim report which the committee promised to deliver before Christmas. It is not long, as reports go. It occupies seventeen foolscap pages. You can read it in twelve minutes, but I hope you will take somewhat longer to digest it. It is an interesting story and there are 14 recommendations. If I may, I will take a few minutes to outline them to you so that you may have the highlights of the report.

The recommendations are as follows:

That a joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons be established for the life of a parliament to review consumer affairs and the state of the Canadian economy.

That a department of consumer affairs, headed by a minister, be established.

That immediate steps be taken to promote standardization and simplification of grades, nomenclature and packaging for commonly purchased consumer items.

That non-price competition by retail food outlets should not be allowed to become sufficiently important to outweigh price competition.

That "cents-off" labels, in view of their tendency to cause confusion and to distort price relationships, should be prohibited.

That the minister to be responsible for consumer affairs undertake a review of the effectiveness of the investigation and prosecution procedures under existing statutes relating to misleading advertising.

That more care should be used in re-marking the prices of goods in the inventories of retail food stores.

That additional staff resources be provided to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics to improve the collection of urgently needed statistical information on price movements.

That more information concerning consumer prices be made available to the public in as simplified a form as possible.

That a thorough review be made of the governmental system of collecting, analysing and issuing other types of economic statistics in addition to price statistics.

That increasing attention be devoted to consumer education both through the educational system and by the wider distribution of

information useful to consumers through Government channels.

That the distinction between disclosure requirements by private companies of significance to the public and public companies be eliminated.

That the disclosure requirements for both public and such private companies be enlarged to assure full and complete disclosure of corporate activities to give to the public sufficient information for meaningful continuous analysis and comparison.

That the Joint Committee on Consumer Credit and Cost of Living continue with its investigation of concentration in the food industry.

You will find some elaboration under each one of these headings. I merely indicate the form which the report took, so as to give you some idea of its contents. Again I suggest to honourable senators that the report is easy to read.

Hon. John J. Conolly: Honourable senators, before the next order is called, and without making a speech upon the matter, I think the Senate, and indeed Parliament and the country, are indebted to the joint chairmen and to all the members of this committee for the arduous task they have undertaken and carried out since this important order of reference was made for their consideration last summer. This work has kept many members of both houses in Ottawa at times when others of us have been enjoying time off. That they have done a painstaking and a thorough going job so far, has been indicated by the kind of attention that has been given to their work by the press and the other news media across the country.

We have nothing but commendation to offer the members of the committee, through its distinguished, able and energetic chairman from this house, for the work they have done. I am sure we will read their report with much interest, and that it will be the subject matter not only of concern but of debate in due time in this house.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Gunnar S. Thorvaldson: Honourable senators, as a humble member of the committee, I would like to support the remarks made by the Leader of the Government, particularly in regard to the capable, efficient and effective work done by the joint chairmen, and especially by Senator Croll.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.