

him something he well knows. No legislative body in the whole of Canada has as many committees as the Ontario legislature of which the hon. gentleman was a member. I hope that this committee will be more effective than some of the ones in that legislature.

• (1630)

The hon. member might be interested in knowing that one of those committees left the day after Christmas to visit Florida, where it remained until the day before New Year's, December 31, investigating the drainage problems of that State of Florida. Of course, the hon. member was not a member of that august body at Christmas of 1972, but he was a member for many years before. That is the absolute fact, and these committee members were paid at the rate of \$50 a day, plus expenses in the best hotel in the whole state. I suggest to the hon. member that he must certainly have changed his mind in the last few months.

An hon. Member: He wishes he were back there.

Mr. Whicher: There are other ways in which the hon. gentleman has changed his mind. His whole speech contained criticism. I do not mind criticism as I feel opposition members have a duty to criticize. I had the privilege of being in the opposition for many years and a member of the so-called rump. I will likely be in that area again after the next election. In any event, I do not mind criticism from opposition members. The difficulty is that they say everything is wrong here in Canada, including the price of food, lower profits and so on. I must say I have never seen such a change as has taken place since October 1972.

In October 1972, the big blue machine from the province of Ontario with its chief lieutenant, the hon. gentleman now sitting in the front benches of the opposition, spent \$5 million to \$6 million on an advertisement which simply said that Ontario is a wonderful place to live. If I am wrong I am sure the hon. member will correct me, particularly if the amount was greater. Millions of dollars were spent in selling this theme throughout the province of Ontario and that party was successful. I cannot understand how, since my hon. friend left the legislature of the great province of Ontario, things have deteriorated so badly. Let me put this rhetorical question. What did the hon. member do when he was the chief lieutenant of the Premier of Ontario to assist in solving the food prices situation in this province which has one-third of the population of the whole of Canada?

I was very disappointed in one regard. The hon. member posed all the questions and said this was a horrible place in which to live, yet he did not provide any answers. I have yet to meet a single citizen in the whole of Canada who does not proudly say that Canada is the finest place in the whole world in which to live. The hon. member told us what was wrong, but he did not give us any solutions. We on this side of the House, and I am sure the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) will agree, hope that when this committee is set up to investigate the price of food it will provide an educational forum for all the people of Canada. If in so doing it can help bring down the price of food, which is the most

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important commodity since every citizen of the world uses it, so much the better.

There are four main areas of inquiry for this committee. I think it has to investigate the price paid to farmers. It must investigate service costs, such as the price of labour in supermarkets and in related fields. It must investigate the profits of supermarkets, if there are any. Lastly, the members of that committee must immediately realize that the consumer is of importance and that he must have some say about the price of food.

Let us look at my first point, the price paid to farmers. I quite frankly doubt that there is a world shortage of food or that there is a shortage here in Canada. If there is a shortage here, then I say this is the fault of this House of Commons, the legislative bodies all across Canada and in fact the people of Canada, because the farmers of this great nation have not had a square deal since 1945. There is no question about this at all, and if you want to be convinced all you have to do is consider the number of farmers who have gone out of business.

Costs to farmers have increased substantially. This is the only area in our economy where cost bears no relationship to the amount paid to the producer. The farmer gets as much or as little as he can, depending on what the market will pay. There are no unions in the agricultural field and as a result the farmer has been caught in this squeeze. The agriculture industry is very important to Canada. Let me read from a brochure under the heading "Farming and Food Costs—Some Facts and Figures". This gives figures to the end of 1972 and after the questions "What is the Importance of Agriculture to Canada? What does it Contribute to our Economy?" states:

- it is the most important primary industry in Canada
- has assets valued at more than \$24 billion and is growing every year
- about one-third of our labor force is directly and indirectly tied to our food and agricultural industry
- agriculture directly employs about 523,000 people
- 220,000 people are involved in food processing and the manufacturing of tobacco, leather products, and farm implements
- about one-sixth of the gross value of our manufacturing industry output is processed products of farm origin
- one-third of the freight moved through the St. Lawrence Seaway is agricultural
- one-fifth of all freight moved by our railways comes from farms
- farmers spend \$3.7 billion each year on goods and services
- in 1971, Canadian farmers spent \$178 million in property taxes
- in 1971, agricultural exports pumped \$2 billion into the Canadian economy; these exports accounted for about 11% of Canada's trade surplus in 1971
- output per agricultural worker has increased 100% in the last 20 years while the area farmed in Canada has remained essentially constant; output per worker in other commercial industries increased 60%

I mention these facts to hon. members of this Chamber, although I am sure they are familiar with them, in an attempt to get this knowledge to our city friends who constantly feel that farmers are the people making the money in this great land of ours. Let me say to you that none of us, and I include myself because I have been in legislatures since 1955 and here since 1968, should hold his head up high in respect of what we have done for the agriculture industry of Canada. That industry deserves