

Price Stability

could be no better forum for them than that provided through the hearings of a joint parliamentary committee.

• (3:10 p.m.)

In view of the flow of reviews of pricing situations that will be emanating from the commission, and the need for assuring that there is adequate opportunity for public discussion of the broader issues involved, I am urging the immediate appointment of a Joint Parliamentary Committee on Price Stability. In addition to its function of carrying out public examination of reports on individual price situations, the committee will also be expected to examine the manner in which the commission has gone about establishing a system for providing quick methods of determining which price increases warrant investigation. I anticipate that these inquiries will reveal the present program is having a significant effect in restraining price increases.

The estimates of my department, and thereby the Prices and Incomes Commission, is presently before the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare. The members of the Prices and Incomes Commission tabled a statement last night before that committee outlining some of the work it is undertaking. For the sake of the record I might review that statement very quickly. The first report of the commission involved a price increase announcement by the steelmakers of Canada, including a variety of rolling-mill products. This report has been tabled in the House and should be examined by this forthcoming parliamentary committee. Secondly, they have issued a report following the National Conference on Price Stability. The report concerns price increases of tinplate. They are now examining a 6 per cent increase in the price of glass containers and examining with the Canadian Transport Commission recently announced railway freight increases.

Mr. Baldwin: You forgot peanut butter.

Mr. Basford: I will come to that. I am glad the hon. member is concerned about peanut butter.

Mr. Baldwin: I was making lunch for my son when I heard that announcement.

Mr. Basford: The commission is working with the copper industry. While copper is still very expensive, we in Canada are paying the lowest price for copper anywhere in the world. The price in Canada is considerably lower than it is in the United States, and well below the world price. It is resulting—

[Mr. Basford.]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I understand the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) seeks the floor to ask a question, if the minister will allow it.

Mr. Basford: I have a limited amount of time, but I will be happy to answer the question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Orlikow: The minister can have all the time he wants. While the minister is talking about the situation in Canada and saying we have the lowest copper price in the world, will he agree to put on the record the fact that in the past 15 months, since January 1, 1969, the price of copper in Canada has risen by 30 per cent?

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I think the government and also the commission have indicated very clearly that we are not happy with the price of copper. However, I think we can take some consolation in the fact that as a result of the work of the Prices and Incomes Commission and its restraining influence, although in Canada we are paying a high price for copper it is a lower price than anywhere else in the world.

I will continue to review the statement filed yesterday. Another part of the work of the commission is that relating to copper. Hon. members will have noticed a statement in the press the other day following negotiations and representations made by the Prices and Incomes Commission to the Aluminum Company of Canada resulting in the price of aluminum ingot and semi-fabricated products not being increased in Canada. Although the world price has increased, the Canadian price to Canadian fabricators remains the same. As a result of the work of the commission, the Aluminum Company of Canada has agreed to keep down its prices. A full review is being conducted by the commission into price increases of tin-plated containers. I think hon. members will appreciate that price increases in glass containers and tin containers can have a pervasive effect throughout the economy, particularly with relation to consumer goods, many of which are packed in tin or glass.

In total, the commission in the period of two months has begun conducting surveys of some 40 products or product groups where price increases have been reported. Reports will be made by the commission on these investigations and will be presented to the House. It seems it will be of vital concern to have these reports examined by a joint committee of both Houses. Some of the products