

as a medical practitioner. Therefore I believe that the consumer has the right to state what the fees are to be for the services that are rendered. I claim that the taxpayer, the consumer, has a claim on the doctor's education and facilities.

This fact was recognized in Newfoundland a few years ago when the premier of that province placed certain restrictions on those members of the medical profession who took advantage of the very generous offer that was made to educate them. In turn they had to commit themselves to work for two years in outpost hospitals. I see nothing wrong with that sort of legislation. It is an admission that the government has the right to intervene on behalf of the consumer when members of this profession set their own rates. As the medical care program of the government begins to take effect the government itself will have more at stake because it will be paying 50 per cent of the cost of services. If medical fees are decided arbitrarily by a hostile medical profession it is easy to see that the profession could wreck the plan, and you and I, Mr. Chairman, and the rest of the people of Canada would be the losers.

The minister has also had his attention drawn through various questions put in the house to other price increases that have recently taken place. In one instance the consumer is not affected directly but indirectly the price he has to pay is affected. I refer to the recent increase in the price of copper. We asked the Minister of Finance to investigate the increase. I do not know the connection between the finance minister and the minister of consumer affairs, but in the long run it is the consumer who pays for price increases. If a basic commodity such as copper suffers a price increase, almost every other commodity on the market suffers similarly. It is in this respect that the minister of consumer affairs has a responsibility to the consumer to intervene.

When the subject of the recent rise in the price of copper was raised the answer given by the finance minister was that there was a world shortage of copper and therefore the price had risen. Also advantage was being taken of a strike of 50,000 copper workers in the United States to squeeze an additional 4 cents a pound, I believe it was, out of the price on the marketplace. At no time did the minister indicate that the profit position of these companies warranted a price increase. At no time did the minister say that the increased price of copper had anything to do

with increased cost of production. There was no relationship between the cost of production and the cost of copper on the market; it was strictly a question of what the market would bear. Yet no action was taken by the minister against the corporations concerned.

I fail to see why the minister did not go to these companies and at least extract from them the admission that there was no legitimate reason to raise the price of copper, thus putting that admission on the record. The profit picture of these companies was good. The only reason they raised the price of copper was to take advantage of a shortage as a result of a strike in the United States and a war in Viet Nam.

I would also draw attention to the fact that gasoline has increased in price, as has fuel oil. These increases affect the consumer directly. In our northern climate fuel oil is essential. Yet the price of fuel oil has unwarrantedly risen. The increase has not been substantiated by the five or six oil companies that have a world-wide monopoly.

The increase in price was not arbitrated in the way the average worker has to arbitrate an increase in his wages. The worker has to go to a conciliation board and expose himself to the whole community. Unless he has community support he will not get an increase in wages. Through this democratic process of submitting his demands to public scrutiny he gets a wage increase. But there is no stipulation that corporations must negotiate with the community before they can increase their prices.

When the legislation to set up this department was going through we pleaded with the minister to include a provision setting up a prices review board. This suggestion was rejected as totally unworkable, unwarranted, unnecessary, regressive, plus a few other objectives. Therefore I was quite surprised the other day to hear the Prime Minister state in this chamber, as reported on page 7536 of *Hansard* for March 12:

We must find some effective means of influencing, not controlling but influencing, the many individual decisions that give rise to increases in incomes, costs and prices. To this end the government proposes to establish a governmental agency, commission or board, whatever it may be called, to review and scrutinize major decisions affecting prices, incomes and costs throughout the economy.

• (4:30 p.m.)

Although the Prime Minister's statement was vague he intimated that the view of our