

● (10:10 p.m.)

Conditions in this country are steadily worsening for low-income people. Back in July the *Globe and Mail* carried an editorial headed "A Damning Indictment", dealing with conditions in Canada's largest city, and I point out that conditions in the cities are growing worse because they are the most congested areas and have the largest percentage of poverty. The editorial recalled as follows:

In 1970 a report to the Senate Committee on Poverty by the Quebec Corporation of Professional Social Workers found infant mortality in underprivileged in Montreal 35.1 per 1,000, twice that of other areas; it found a third of grade 1 poor children undernourished, and half suffering from emotional problems; it found three times as many of them with intelligence quotients under 80.

Low intelligence, as explained in another 1970 report, could be accounted for by undernourishment. A child who is undernourished in his first months of life, or whose mother is undernourished during pregnancy, has less than the normal rate of cell division and ends up with fewer brain cells. Or, as explained in the 1970 report of the Claude Castonguay commission to the Quebec Health Department, "A great lack of food during the first 18 months of a child's life prevents a normal cerebral development."

In my own city of Vancouver last February the city social service's own nutritionist, Rosemary Callaway, inquired how much people on welfare actually spent, and sent a report to the city administration. I quote:

Take a family of four—father, mother and boys 15 and 16. Eating as cheaply as possible, but getting proper foods, the family needs \$127.37 a month. Food allowance—\$101.

Or take a family of six—mother, boys 16, 14, and 14, and girls 15 and 13. Even with a 10 per cent adjustment for buying in quantity they need \$162.93. They'll get \$150.

One mother was asked:

How do you make do with four growing boys and a welfare cheque of \$257 a month?

Simple. "Towards the end of the month we cut down on food . . .

We eat mostly soup and potatoes—we eat a lot of potatoes.

These are conditions that exist all across Canada. For the life of me I cannot understand why we in this House cannot expect some kind of answer from the government with respect to these conditions. It is not as though these conditions are static and not becoming worse. Recently I talked with a woman here in Ottawa. She is a public servant and does not have a particularly high salary. For three people she spends \$36 a week, or \$144 a month for food, which is just exactly about half of what the relief rates give. Her family is properly nourished, but this other family is undernourished.

How can this problem be met? There are various ways. In a great many countries they do it by the provision of school meals—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to her has expired.

Mr. P. M. Mahoney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, one of the more challenging things that confront one in responding to questions at

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this hour, particularly those posed by the hon. lady from Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis), is that in the comments she makes during the seven minutes allotted—and she has not disappointed us again tonight in using the allotted time—she generally covers a wide range of subjects of which there was no intimation in the original question. The original question dealt with food prices in Canada, and the response which we have prepared for this regretfully does not cover many of the subjects which the hon. lady just dealt with in her comments. However, the basic purport of the response is that the interpretation which has been placed on statistics, and indeed the selection of statistical information which she has chosen to support her argument, are not well founded.

During the latter part of 1970, food prices declined substantially, largely because there was a price war among retail food chains in Central Canada. The price war came to an end early this year and many of the price cuts were rescinded. In consequence, food prices rose very rapidly, particularly for a few months. The rate of increase has tended to moderate more recently. The food price index increased substantially from June to July, but seasonal factors seem to have been a major factor in the increase. The rise from May to July of this year was slightly lower than the average increase between these two months over the last decade. In spite of the increases of recent months, food prices in July were only 1.3 per cent higher than in July, 1970. This was the smallest increase for any 12-month period ending in July recorded since 1960.

[Translation]

INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, you will allow me simply to ask once more the question which I directed to the Prime Minister on May 13 last:

In view of the contradictions which cast doubts on his words, could the Prime Minister once and for all clarify the situation and tell us whether or not the existence of a parallel government under the leadership of Mr. Claude Ryan has influenced the government in its decision to invoke the War Measures Act last October?

[English]

Mr. Barnett J. Danson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, with reference to the question of the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte) I should like to refer to *Hansard* for the period in question, which was a very very dramatic one in the life of this Parliament and in the life of this country. I quote from *Hansard* of October 26, 1970, halfway down page 547, where the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said:

They are very clear facts. First, we had from the authorities of the province of Quebec and of the city of Montreal a clear statement that they apprehended insurrection. Second, there had been the abduction of two very important citizens in the province of Quebec, with an intention to murder them if the government did not give in to ransom. The third fact was circumstantial, if you wish, that approximately two tons of dynamite had been stolen in the province of Quebec this year, as well as a sizeable number of small arms and other ammunition. Also, there was such a state of confusion and threats of violence in the province of Quebec. We decided to act on these facts as we interpreted them, and on this the government will stand or fall.