

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 7, 1974

The House met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

REGULATIONS AND OTHER STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

Third report of Standing Joint Committee on Regulations and other Statutory Instruments—Mr. McCleave.

[Editor's Note: For text of above report, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

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FOOD PRICES

SUGGESTED CONTROL OF PRICE OF BREAD AND MILK— REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of urgent and pressing necessity in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 43. The consumer price index released today by Statistics Canada shows the largest September to October change in 24 years. Bread, milk and sugar combined to push the food component up by 1.4 per cent. On September 4, 1973, the Prime Minister introduced a program to subsidize domestic wheat to keep down the price of bread and a five-cent per quart subsidy to keep down the price of milk. In view of the dietary importance of milk and bread and in order to ensure that Canadians on lower and fixed incomes will not be deprived of these two vital elements of an adequate diet, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin):

That in the opinion of this House the government should give immediate consideration to introduce measures to control the spiralling cost of bread and milk in Canada.

Mr. Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion being proposed pursuant to Standing Order 43. It cannot be debated without the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There not being unanimous consent the motion cannot be put.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

STATISTICS CANADA

ALLEGATION ADVANCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO MINISTERS—SUGGESTION THAT PRACTICE BE STOPPED

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. It being reliably reported that the departments of government, and perhaps as well ministers, are receiving reports of Statistics Canada sometimes several days in advance of their being made public, I should like to ask the Acting Prime Minister whether he has any comment to make on this report and whether he will give the House assurance that any such practice will be discontinued immediately?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, may I make one general comment and then ask my colleague the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce to answer more fully. My opening comment is that this is not a new policy. It is a policy which has existed since the 1950's and was followed, for example, by the administration of the right hon. member for Prince Albert.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege to say to the minister that his statement is false. Documents were delivered to the press and to the public on the same day as received and were not kept under cover for several days as is the practice of the present administration.

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I should like to tell the House that that is not my information.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Your information is generally wrong. We have found that out.

Mr. Gillespie: We have made full and very extensive inquiries and have been assured that this is a long-term practice and I believe for very good reasons. The general public expects ministers to be fully informed of selected indicators of the country's economic performance.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is what you have been asleep on.

Mr. Gillespie: The government at the same time is continually reviewing the needs of departments in this connection and for that reason we have a departmental committee examining the practice at this time.