

Canada-U.S. Food-Aid Program

gap. We also have in this country what most Canadians admit is a generous welfare program. I am therefore wondering how valid is the hon. member's argument. I do not want to sound critical. There is no question that there are still hunger problems. I appreciate the manner in which the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway presented information to the House but I wonder if we should not concentrate more upon telling homemakers, in cases where there is a limited supply of money, what are the proper foods to buy and use.

It was my privilege to attend a homemakers' convention in Sardis. The hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway also attended that convention. The dental care of native children residing on reservations was discussed. The dentist there was doing his best to point out to the people that it was the inadequate diet, the food that the children were eating, more than the lack of dental care that was causing these problems. I think we should go further in educating homemakers and consumers about the proper foods to buy. I agree with the statements made by the hon. member in this respect.

● (5:30 p.m.)

There is another point that has not been raised. It may be deemed irrelevant, but there can be considerable abuse when an internal food aid program is used to distribute food in order to assist families. When there is a real shortage of funds the program is sometimes abused to the point where food is exchanged for cash. When this happens the program does not do the job it is intended to do.

In Canada and the United States we have many foods rich in protein such as, if Your Honour will pardon the expression, eggs and poultry. They are considerably cheaper now than they were 20 years ago and are extensively used by low-income families. It is not fair to say that reasonably priced, high protein food is not available in Canada.

There is another aspect of this matter on which I would like to dwell for a moment. Before doing so I would emphasize that I am not opposed to our carrying out as much study and investigation as possible on food programs now and in the future. We must endeavour to get into this field at some time, hopefully paying it a good deal of care and attention. I am convinced there is room for food distribution programs in Canada. However, the main problem is producer economics. When food is overproduced, very seldom is the producer reimbursed his cost of production. Placing surplus food in the homes of people will not really solve the economic problem so far as producers are concerned. Surpluses are taken and passed on to other areas. A great deal could be accomplished so that producers would be in a better position to at least earn a decent living and, through taxes, able to contribute to other programs for the underprivileged or low-income groups. We need to export our surplus food.

I would be remiss in my duty if I failed to mention Canadian foreign aid to developing countries. In this respect we are not doing as much as we could and should do. Our total foreign aid shipments in 1955-56 amounted

[Mr. Pringle.]

to \$35 million. In 1966-67 they were well over \$100 million, and they are rising. We have been shipping to our foreign friends approximately 60 per cent in cereals, 30 per cent in dairy products and the remainder in fish and egg powder. We have an enviable record with regard to the expansion that is taking place. However, we should endeavour to increase foreign aid in the form of food deliveries even though many problems are involved. We also have a very enviable reputation in the developing countries with regard to the quality of our food. This is appreciated.

I appreciate the approach of the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway. I hope my remarks have been of some assistance to the hon. member. I hope we will consider the problems of internal food aid programs and consider studying within the economics branch of the Department of Agriculture steps which we might take to improve the lot of our underprivileged, low-income groups and to increase the nutritional value of food.

[Translation]

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say a few words on the motion proposed by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis):

This motion has surely some merit and should be considered, but I do not feel that the government should provide food for certain individuals because the cost of living is very high. I believe there is only one solution to this problem.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, there is no food shortage in Canada. We know that all the food and agricultural sectors throughout the country show enormous production surpluses. We know also that all the farmers and all the industries in the food business would only be too happy to see consumers buy their products.

● (5:40 p.m.)

Those producers would like consumption to increase, but many people are too poor to consume more and must deprive themselves. Some people must eat food that is not too wholesome, that is nutritionally poor. There are many families who do not have enough money to buy steak, even once a month, because it costs 1.25 or \$1.50 a pound. Indeed, those families do not have the means to buy such nutritious food that some people would like to taste because they are natural foodstuffs.

However, in view of the fact that not all Canadians have the means to feed themselves properly, that production is plentiful and that there are enough foodstuffs in the groceries to feed a population three times as large as that of Canada, problems do not exist in the area of production as far as we know, but they do exist in the area of consumption.

If we want to promote consumption without having to hire new staff to administer such services, there is just one thing to do, in my opinion, and that is to increase family allowances which have not changed since 1945, whereas the cost of living has increased fourfold. Let us give these poor families more substantial family allow-