

The Address—Mrs. MacInnis

In British Columbia, where canned and fresh salmon have been a primary source of protein, last year the two companies which dominate and control 85 per cent to 90 per cent of all west coast fishing shipped vast quantities of salmon mostly to Britain and Japan because they could get a higher price there. They created a shortage here and raised the price to the Canadian consumer. The price went up and up, and it recently went up again. Before anybody tells me that the companies had to do that, let me tell them that over a 39-week period ending June 17, B.C. Packers had a 25 per cent increase in sales and an increase in profits of 124 per cent. That is gouging at its best.

Mr. Cullen: What was the return on investment?

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway): The government is doing nothing about that, and there was no forecast in the Speech from the Throne. I know the chairman of the Food Prices Review Board would have liked to see stronger measures in there and is wishing that he had them, but there is nothing there. There is nothing in the throne speech that deals with this sort of thing.

Mr. Cullen: Please make it the committee, not the board.

An hon. Member: He has not been elevated yet.

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway): Letters are now coming in, and I have been shown about two dozen from one of the smaller Ontario cities where there is a good, steady payroll. They say things like this:

Isn't there anything you can do to stop the increases in all prices? All companies and stores seem to have great profits when they give out their figures. The feeds are going up for animals, fertilizers also. This means the farmer can't afford to keep a farm, and with many of them going out of business we in a few years will have a lot less food. We have potatoes in the Valley and other areas, and when they go into our stores they charge the same that they charge for P.E.I. or N.B. potatoes. How can the prices be the same? I've spoken to some farmers and they say they don't get the difference, so where does it go? Milk went up from 22 cents a can to 26 cents. Sugar has gone up from \$1.59 to \$2.69 for ten pounds. These are just a few, and it's getting worse all the time.

Here is another letter from the same place:

Sugar has gone up terribly, white beans, spaghetti and eggs. Good heavens, I am sure all these don't depend on anchovies off the Peruvian coast.

I am sure, too, and I think it is high time we did something about this. The Prime Minister can talk tough, but I would mention again the particular situation where after careful investigation the Food Prices Review Board said that bakeries in Canada are not justified in wanting to raise the price of a loaf of bread to three cents or four cents and that their direct cost increases are, instead, in the neighbourhood of one cent to 1¼ cents per 24-ounce loaf. How about getting in there, Mr. Prime Minister, if you want to stop the gougers and corporate profiteers from piling up unearned windfall profits?

Turning to the matter of subsidies, I find that we will be paying about \$129.5 million in subsidies for manufactured milk products this year. In spite of that, we are now told that the price of cheese will rise by ten cents per pound. Who is getting the difference between what the producer of milk is paid and what the consumer is charged? Unfortunately, the Kraft corporation does not publish profit figures. That fact is something at which the Prime Minis-

[Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway).]

ter could shoot. I think the profit figures of Kraft would be tremendously interesting to a lot of consumers across the country.

Then what about salmon? Is the government considering export controls or a two-price system for salmon? I know that in spite of the profits the companies have made, the fishermen this year are going to get about 52 cents per pound for their catch. This has been the situation while the consumer has had to pay \$2.49 a pound for whole salmon in the stores. I wish the Prime Minister were here so that he could hear more about the complaints of consumers.

● (1750)

Let us consider sugar. As my leader said the other day, the three sugar companies making up the sugar cartel, which were tried and fined in the courts ten years ago, are now being tried again under the Combines Investigation Act. How about imposing fines suitable for criminals, or how about jail terms as a means of bringing home to some of these criminals what they are doing to the people of the country when they raise prices? Such action, I think, would be excellent. These companies have taken \$125 million from the pockets of consumers in the last decade. If you took that much in a robbery or hold-up, you would probably go to jail for 100 years and everyone would hope that you would live that long and serve the sentence. Something must be done.

Mr. Peters: What is more, the money would probably have to be returned.

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway): As my colleague says, the money would probably have to be returned. In the face of this, it is no good saying that a crop failure in Patagonia, Timbuktu or Outer Mongolia caused the shortage. We, in this country, produce some of all the products necessary for a good, balanced, nutritious diet. Agnes Higgins of the Montreal diet dispensary says that if we were willing to spend \$100 on good pre-natal nutrition for pregnant women, we might later save the community \$200,000 in the cost of caring for those who are being damaged now because of bad pre-natal diet.

Why does the government not go after that program instead of giving us fine sounding speeches from the throne, and Mrs. Plumptre as the head of a Food Prices Review Board without teeth or the power to act? Do not forget who voted against the idea of a selective Food Prices Review Board. Do not forget that the Conservatives opposed the idea. They made it impossible for us to get a selective Food Prices Review Board, something which the consumer must have. It is clear that consumers have rejected their stand, just as it is clear that people in Britain rejected the Tory government, there very largely because the cost of living had gone so high.

We reject the stupid idea, put forward by the opposition, of sitting down for 90 days to contemplate our navels, and then, hopefully coming up with the answers to the problems of inflation. We have the food in this country. We reject the system proposed by the official opposition, which boils down to restraint for the poor and opportunity for the affluent.