

For the first time, full public disclosure of the business practices and affairs of companies appearing before your Committee was requested. This applied to Canadian companies as well as to subsidiaries of non-Canadian corporations. In some instances, new light was thrown on extensive inter-corporate relationships which had not been made public before. In one case, one newspaper reported "For the first time, amazing extent of holdings revealed" and a press service referred to the "Stunning scope of food empire". All the proceedings were open and no information was given to your Committee in confidence. There was extensive coverage of the work of your Committee in the newspapers and on the radio and television.

3. The Need for Improved Statistical Information

Your Committee experienced some difficulty in obtaining satisfactory statistics on the prices of a number of important commodities at the farm, wholesale and retail levels. This was particularly true of meats. In part, this arose from the division of responsibility between the Department of Agriculture and the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. It is the view of your Committee that there will be continuing interest in the trend of prices. For purposes of economic analysis and studies of distribution, improved statistics concerning prices at all distributive levels are essential. For this reason, it recommends both a greater degree of interdepartmental co-ordination in the compilation of price statistics and the diversion of professional staff to expand and improve the statistical information on prices throughout the public service, and particularly in the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. While the quality of the work performed by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics is very good, your Committee firmly believes that its work in some fields was being impeded by shortages of professionally qualified staff.

The principal way of informing the public of the changing level of prices is the monthly Consumer Price Index issued by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. This is a sophisticated and valuable economic measuring device but it is nevertheless difficult for an ordinary consumer to interpret it as it applies to her normal purchases for her family. While the existing published consumer price indexes provide a very useful measure of price movements affecting consumers nationally and in major urban centres, additional statistical indicators are required. In particular, there is a pressing need for the Dominion Bureau of Statistics to broaden the scope of its retail pricing program to encompass a wider range of qualities of goods and services and to allow more useful item price averages to be derived, by cities, on a continuing basis. It is recognized that an expansion of available retail price statistics along these lines will require additional resources, both in the field collection of price data and in its evaluation, processing and analysis. A good deal of information on various aspects of consumer prices is published by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics but it is not usually easily available to the consumer. The consumer appears to be less well served in this respect than some other groups in the community. For example, her ability to detect seasonal and other trends in food prices is impaired by a lack of information. Your Committee recognizes that there are technical problems in compiling accurate price statistics but nevertheless believes that it is an appropriate governmental function to disseminate price information as widely as possible to the consuming public.