

*Food Prices*

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Does the hon. member for Joliette agree?

**Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue):** The independent member does agree.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

## FOOD PRICES

The House resumes consideration of the motion of Mrs. MacInnis: That the first report of the Special Committee on Trends in Food Prices, presented to the House on April 2, 1973, be concurred in.

[Translation]

**Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue):** Mr. Speaker, I resume the outline of the solution advocated by the Creditists for some 30 or 35 years. When we suggest the setting up of a compensated discount on retail prices, after agreement between the central government and Canadian retailers of course, so that prices might remain what they are, we feel that the retailer should be free and not forced to adhere to the agreement. If he did, he would become entitled to the discount decreed by the government. A Minister of Consumer Affairs or Consumers should not be appointed in Canada. The Minister of Finance could be used and that would create far less embarrassment than the present situation. Let us take a typical example. At the present time, any . . . member or any other Canadian can buy for \$1,000 of Canadian goods at current prices. If he does not have the money, he borrows from a finance company. In such cases, it will cost him \$200 to finance his \$1,000; meaning he will have to reimburse \$1,200 for \$1,000 worth of merchandise. If that same buyer has \$1,000 to pay cash, he will be able, in most areas of economic activities, to obtain a 20 per cent discount. If he is granted a 20 per cent discount, this means it will cost him only \$800 to obtain \$1,000 worth of goods at current prices.

Mr. Speaker, this represents a difference of \$400 on a \$1,000 purchase. It is a matter of a 40 per cent saving, or \$400 on \$1,000. Mr. Speaker, this solution would help the consumer and would boost his purchasing power without price increases. It would be entirely different from what we hear the other political parties propose. It's easy to tell the government: You are wrong, your are wrong, you are wrong. There are two or three New Democratic governments in Canada. Let us go and see if prices are different in the New Democratic provinces. A can of tomatoes costs as much in Winnipeg as in Montréal. And yet a New Democratic government has been in office for three or four years.

When I hear the New Democrats talk like that in the House, I say to myself they are a bunch of practical jokers. They are people who state principles, but who are incapable of applying them. So they accuse Ottawa. In the province of Quebec, a department wants to help consumers, while at the same time another suggests a tax increase and a third thinks that the minimum salary must be increased and that the establishment of an annual guaran-

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

teed income must be pursued, but not get financing where it must come from. Oh no! They get it by levying taxes, from the taxpayers' pocket. That raises prices still further. Then there are reports from commissions. As though we did not have enough commissions! We have the Food Prices Commission, and the commission to help producers form associations to protect their prices. After that, it is suggested that we have a commission to control consumer prices. The consumer will be told, as I said at the beginning: Do not eat bananas, do not eat too many apples, get sardines instead, do not go here, do not go there. There are controls and commissions for all these things. We also have the prices commission, and another commission to check if the prices commission is taking sensible action, and a third one to check on the checkers. So we build a pyramid of bureaucrats. And who pays for all that? The consumer whom we are supposed to be trying to help. It is a pretty comic set-up. They called themselves a Liberal-Progressive-New Democratic coalition, but all three have the same solution, and none of them has the courage to attack the financial system that has caused the economic chaos which, in turn, mirrors the chaos of the whole society. We are witness to the discontent of all classes of society and the uprising of young people against those in power, against the authorities. Why all this? These are the consequences of a system that refuses to serve them.

The answer, Mr. Speaker, is a 20 or 30 per cent compensated retail discount, to be negotiated with the retailers. There were protests recently about the 4, 5 or 6 cents a quart rise in the price of milk. And people ask how we are going to feed children in poor families. With spruce or birch "juice"? It is not so bad in spring; there is always maple water, in the areas that produce it. But that does not solve the problem. Talking about milk, they say: The big dairies are the ones which are exploiting us; but they do not say that 25 years ago, you could buy a quart of milk for 12 cents. Oh no. Only then, a milkman would earn \$35 a week. You could buy a milkman's truck for about \$2,000; and gas for 22 cents a gallon; a tire cost \$10. Today the milkman gets \$125 or \$150 a week. A truck which was sold about \$2,000 now costs \$5,000. All this affects milk prices to a certain extent.

The refrigerator trucks used for transporting milk were not very widespread 25 years ago. People drank fresh milk when it was not sour. They were sometimes forced to put in some gin. Mr. Speaker, things have changed since then. If we urged the New Democratic Party members to reduce the milkmen's wages and the price of trucks as well as the wages of people who work for Ford, General Motors, Chrysler Corporation or American Motors, they would cry shame. Nobody wants to admit that conditions have completely changed. I find we pay too much for milk but does the farmer get more? He gets more today than ten years ago when we were elected to this House. For his industrial milk, the farmer gets at least twice the price he received ten years ago. The price is \$5.35 a hundredweight.

**Mr. Gauthier (Roberval):** It is \$5.37.

**Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue):** It is \$5.37 a hundredweight. Mr. Speaker, I think they got \$2.64 in 1960.