

*Food Policy*

country. What is going to happen to prices when the cost of energy climbs? What are they doing about conservation in the food area? What are they doing about alternative sources of energy for producing food?

Already we are aware of what increased fuel costs have done to some of the fruit and vegetable growers in Ontario. That is the minister's own province, and still he has not looked at it. What are they doing about the environmental effects? We have soil erosion in this country. The quality of our soil is going down because of increased use of pesticides in Canada. That raises some serious questions about the quality of food in the future and the quality of our soil. What are they doing about that? I have already mentioned tariffs. What are they doing about tariffs? Canada is becoming less and less efficient in the production of food.

Aside from the availability of food, the government should have dealt with the quality of food. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs said that consumers are becoming more and more conscious and concerned about the quality of food in this country. He did not say what they were going to do about it. Some 1,800 different chemicals are put into our food on a routine basis, and there are hundreds of others which are used. There is more and more linkage of some of our diseases today to the type of foods we are eating in this country. Nothing is being done about this. There are no new policies in terms of the quality of food in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, before you rise to cut me off, there are no changes in the manner in which we produce food in this country. The government is not going to change the old market system which has created a lot of our problems. They are not going to bring more equity into the food system for farmers, on one side, and for the consumers on the other side, despite the fact that we have had a drop in farm income and an up and down bouncing of prices over the years.

There are many problems to be faced if we want to have a good food policy in this country. The farmers of my area are concerned about the so-called government ideas regarding bigness, efficiency and competition. Farmers believe the most efficient way of producing food is through the family farm unit. What new ideas and policies do we have to protect that method of producing food? The government sits idly by while there are certain forces in the west promoting huge inland terminals to replace the country elevators. Huge companies are coming in to squeeze out the wheat pools. What new policy is there to protect the family farms across this country? Those are the questions which have to be raised. It has been a sham and a public relations job by the government as they enter an election campaign.

Mr. Towers: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs concerning food safety and good nutrition. Some time ago I asked the minister, due to the fact that offshore meat was of an inferior quality, what the position of the government was as to the labelling of that meat. At that time he said he was going to have a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture. Can he tell

us whether he has had that meeting with the minister, and what the results of it were?

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I did not meet directly with the minister, but I asked officials of my department to consult with his officials. The question as to the quality of meat from offshore would be principally that of the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Towers: Mr. Speaker, I would like to have the reaction of the Minister of Agriculture and his position in regard to the labelling of offshore meat, so that the Canadian consumer will be aware whether it is inferior quality meat which is being purchased or whether it is domestic quality meat.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is concerned about labelling, that it is going to be labelled as inferior quality, etc., we could not do that because the protein content is practically the same as it is in Canada. The nourishment and nutrition in that meat is practically the same as you would get from a similar kind of meat in Canada. It meets those standards, and there is nothing one can do to change that. If frozen meat is brought in and put on a meat counter, it changes colour and it is easily recognized as compared to a fresh Canadian meat product.

Mr. Towers: Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer my question. What are the possibilities of having it labelled as offshore meat?

Mr. Whelan: It would be an additional cost to the consumer, mainly. I do not know what advantage it would be to them.

Mr. Towers: Oh, come on.

Mr. Whelan: It is being considered. We are looking at many different foods being brought into Canada. We have had requests from many consumers in Canada similar to the request the hon. member has made. They want to have a label which indicates whether it is a product of Canada or whether it is an imported product. There is no denying that. There is a general trend in the consuming public to want that form of labelling on any product they buy.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It is one o'clock, and there are several members who have indicated a desire to ask questions. There has been a double statement. The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) made a point earlier with respect to the expectation of quite a number of questions with respect to these statements. It is always possible to continue in an attempt to finish such questions. If there were a suggestion to continue, I could take it under consideration. I must have some indication of consensus as to the House rising now in the ordinary way and returning at two o'clock in order to complete this matter, together with the remaining routine proceedings. Is there unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.