

### Food Prices

thank hon. members for their contributions with regard to a very interesting point of order.

The issue is as follows. The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) has moved that the second report of the Special Committee on Trends in Food Prices be concurred in. This committee report is to be found at pages 509 to 514 of *Votes and Proceedings* for Wednesday, July 25. It contains nine recommendations. None of these deals directly with prices except the first one which is as follows:

● (1730)

The committee recommends that the Food Prices Review Board immediately begin to study the effects of controls in other countries on the price and availability of food in those countries and furthermore discourages any attempt by the board to set itself up solely as an educational agency.

The hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore (Mr. Grier) has moved an amendment to the motion for concurrence which is in these terms:

That the second report of the Special Committee on Trends in Food Prices be not now concurred in, but that it be referred back to the said committee for the purpose of giving reconsideration to the inclusion therein of a recommendation that the Food Prices Review Board be reconstituted with full power to require cancellation or roll-back of unjustified price increases wherever it finds them.

Procedural argument was then joined and the Chair has had the benefit of the best presentations possible. I have to remind members of the House that the special committee is still in existence and has scheduled further meetings. The relevant part of the original motion which set up the committee is as follows, and I quote from our proceedings on January 23 as reported at page 561 of *Hansard*:

That a special committee of this House be appointed to enquire into and make recommendations upon the trends in food prices in Canada and factors domestic and foreign which account for these trends—

It was not disputed by anyone taking part in the procedural argument that the purposes set out in the amendment of the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore were not within the original terms of reference setting up the committee. Is the hon. member, then, asking the House to review its decision to concur in a recommendation to establish the Food Prices Review Board? However, I will not determine the issue on that point.

The two issues that I must decide are as follows. First, is the amendment relevant to the content of the second report of the special committee? There is some doubt in the mind of the Chair that it is. Second, the report is an interim one, and while the committee may not wish to review any or all of the ground it has covered in its two interim reports, it does appear to the Chair that there is no impediment to the committee making a further or final report on any subject so long as that subject is within its terms of reference.

The attention of the Chair was drawn to the decision of Mr. Speaker on April 17. I think the decision as interpreted by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) does not deal with the point I am deciding at this moment. I have decided that the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore is out of order for the reasons I have mentioned.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

May I refer the House, in conclusion, to citation 220(1) of *Beauchesne's Fourth Edition*, page 182:

If the subject matter of an instruction is within the scope of the question referred to the committee then such instruction is useless and irregular.

Some other citations that appeared to lend authority to the proposition that there could be a recommendation back to the committee were rejected by the Chair because it seemed to the Chair that they were dealing with final reports and the committee would not otherwise be in a position to function again. But there is no question in the mind of the Chair that the committee whose report is being considered is still alive and will be holding further meetings.

**Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, let me again say that I welcome this opportunity to comment on the second report of the Special Committee on Trends in Food Prices and to speak to this motion seeking the concurrence of the House in the report. I also welcome the rather belated conversion of the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) to the status of being a supporter of the Special Committee on Trends in Food Prices and its work. Certainly his approach today is a far cry from his approach when the committee was being created and during its first hearings. When the first report of that committee was being debated in this House, as the House will recall, at that time he and his Conservative colleagues voted against concurring in the first report, the one which he speaks in support of so earnestly today.

At that time the hon. member for St. John's East, as reported at page 3150 of *Hansard*, said:

—if that committee is to be effective, it can only do useful work within the framework of a freeze. That is why we do not support the recommendations, or the major recommendation, of the committee. That is why we, if this motion comes to a vote, will vote against it.

One can assess the merit and weight of his words today in light of what he said on April 10 last.

There has been a lot of discussion as a result of the August cost of living statistics which were released last Thursday. They are, of course, of concern to me and to the government and I hope they are of concern to every hon. member. However, I think it is something to be noted again that these statistics were gathered during the first week of August, and therefore this was before the measures announced by the government on August 13 and September 4 had begun to take effect. Since then there have been some hopeful signs that the prices of some of the items leading the surge in the food index in early August have begun to level out. Indeed, there has been an actual decline in the prices of some commodities such as beef and pork.

The statements of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) on August 13 and September 4 demonstrated the government's determination to assist Canadians in meeting the extraordinary pressures placed on the family budget by the worldwide inflation in the price of foodstuffs. In his statements the Prime Minister set out a comprehensive plan of action in three parts: first, measures to conserve and increase the supply of food; second, measures to help protect the consumer against those who may be taking