

*The Address—Mr. Ouellet*

So it is extremely important that we deal efficiently with the rate of inflation. And to do that we need to know better the reasons for price increases, and whether they are warranted. That is why I was happy to see in the Speech from the Throne that the terms of the Food Prices Review Board will be extended until the end of 1975.

I think that board plays a very significant role. I want to pay tribute here to the chairman of that board and its members for the impartial and consistent manner in which they conducted their surveys and for all the recommendations they made.

All we need to do is take a look at an article in this week's *Citizen* to find to what extent more adequate information given the public will directly influence Canadian firms that otherwise might be led to exaggerate and abuse the situation in this climate of steadily rising inflation, in order to unduly boost their prices. We have found surprising results following the publication of weekly bulletins by the Food Prices Review Board: food prices in the Ottawa area supermarkets have been lowered. Suddenly, people have come to realize this and I quote this article from the *Citizen* which states:

● (1410)

[English]

However, an IGA store on Tache Boulevard in Hull has managed to slash its price index by 9.8 per cent from last week.

This week's index indicates that most stores have again lowered prices marginally, a couple a good deal.

**An hon. Member:** For how long?

**Mr. McGrath:** Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

**Mr. Ouellet:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, at the end of my speech I will be delighted to answer a question.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, this proves that such a body can play an efficient and important role. I hope this investigation will not be limited to the Ottawa area only, but that it will be conducted throughout Canada, because I feel that the better informed consumers are and the more business and private enterprise people realize they are being watched, the better market and competition we shall have in Canada.

I wish to complete my remarks by saying that a great many measures remain to be adopted to better protect consumers. The Speech from the Throne dealt with reforms aimed at accelerating parliamentary proceedings. Notwithstanding these reforms, I urge all hon. members to co-operate closely with my department when it introduces measures during the next few months, because the better acts we have, the better protected Canadian consumers will be.

[English]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) wishes to ask a question of the minister. The time of the minister has just expired, so the hon. member may ask a question only by unanimous consent. Is it agreed that the question be allowed?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

[Mr. Ouellet.]

**Mr. McGrath:** Mr. Speaker, the minister did not refer to the need for consumer representation on marketing boards, notwithstanding the announcement made by his colleague the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) yesterday. He did not refer, either, to the report of Professor Forbes which was commissioned by his department, although it was made to the Consumer Advisory Council. That report has been in his possession since May at the very latest. What recommendations has the minister made to his cabinet colleagues, and what steps has he taken to implement the major recommendations of that study?

[Translation]

**Mr. Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, it is merely because I was too pressed for time that I was not able to deal with all the important subjects I wished to deal with today. I can say to the hon. member that I am extremely happy that the hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) announced last evening, during his speech in this House, that there would be an important representation of consumers on the National Farm Products Marketing Council.

As a matter of fact, I had asked that consumers be represented. It seems there will be three new representatives of the general public on the marketing boards. I think that is of the utmost importance because one must never forget that it is essential, whatever the responsibility of an organization may be, whether the agency controls the marketing of eggs or any other product, whenever an organization is granted almost absolute powers, it is essential, I repeat, for members of that body to be conscious of the public interest and to be more concerned with the interests of the general public than with those of a particular group, especially when an organization is being given almost absolute powers.

I believe that such a representation of the public, of consumers, of businessmen, of labour in that organization will take care of that situation and enable that body to be more accountable to the public.

As regards the last part of the question of the hon. member, concerning the Forbes report, I must say that I have just received it. I asked the Council that does research in the field of consumer affairs to let me have officially its views on that report. I know that the hon. member seems to have received a copy of it. I am told that he did indeed but that it is not an official copy. I will be pleased to make that report public sometime next week. The document will then be official and I will be in a position to talk about it in due course and at length, which is not the case this afternoon.

● (1420)

**Mr. John Reynolds (Burnaby-Richmond-Delta):** First of all, Mr. Speaker, I should like to congratulate you and to tell you, on behalf of my constituents in the Burnaby-Richmond-Delta riding, how pleased we are to see you and your deputies hold your respective parts.

[English]

**Some hon. Members:** More.

**Mr. Reynolds:** Mr. Speaker, members across the floor are asking me to speak more French. I am saving it for later. Next week I will begin taking French lessons. In