

*Cost of Living*

**Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday afternoon I listened with a great deal of interest to the contribution of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) to this debate. While it is difficult at this hour of three o'clock in the morning to make a fresh or wide awake contribution, I appreciate having had the opportunity and the time, since the speech of the minister, to sort out and categorize some of the individuals and groups whom the minister yesterday afternoon, as indeed he has on previous occasions, blamed for the uncontrolled inflation in Canada.

I hasten to add that the list is by no means exhaustive and is in no particular order of priority, which is of course entirely in keeping with the policy of this minister and this government of having no priorities whatsoever. This is the list of people whom the minister blames for inflation: first are the people who throw away food; second, restaurants which throw away food; third, newspapers which create an atmosphere of inflation; fourth, rip-offs by unscrupulous packers, millers and bread manufacturers; fifth, people who buy freezers, especially those who have three or four freezers; six, unwarranted gangsters. I am not sure what is the difference between unwarranted gangsters and any other type of gangsters, but I am only using the minister's words. This is the minister's description, and this is how he described this group on the CTV "Question Period" of August 4, and I quote him very carefully:

The bastards that are raising the price (of beef) 40 cents and 50 cents a pound.

The seventh group is speculators who are having a field day. The eighth group—and again I will quote the minister on the CTV "Question Period"—he described as follows:

Weston's or those big companies that have got control of manufacturing, processing and bakeries in Canada that can just about damn well do what they want.

The ninth group is unions who shut down the railways. The tenth group is hog producers who accept \$64 per hundredweight for their product. The eleventh is the United States of America. The twelfth is Japan. The thirteenth is Argentina. The fourteenth is the economists and professors who should be on welfare. The fifteenth group is the minister's own advisers. On the previously mentioned CTV national program he described his advisers in the following way:

They don't know a damn thing about consumers and they don't know a damn thing about farmers.

The sixteenth group is the marketing boards which take unwarranted rip-offs, and the final, seventeenth group—I presume the last, but by no means the least in the minister's opinion—is the opposition parties in this House.

● (0310)

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) speaks often, and we always receive from his department transcripts of or notes for his speeches. He often speaks in a humorous vein, which we all enjoy, but the humour becomes somewhat galling and the laughter hollow. There may be some substance or some reason to blame, to some degree or another, any or all of these 17 groups I have listed and others I have failed to list. But the tragedy is this, Mr. Speaker—and the humour and the laughter stop at this

[Mr. Hurlburt.]

point—that once the minister casts the blame, he stops. There is no follow-up; there is no action; there are no recommendations; there are no priorities; there is no thrust; there is no interest.

What, if anything, does the Minister of Agriculture propose to do about his "unwarranted gangsters"? What, if anything, does he propose to do about Weston's or other big companies? What, if anything, does he propose to do about unscrupulous packers, millers and bread manufacturers? What, if anything, does he propose to do about speculators having a field day? What, if anything, does he propose to do about his own advisers who, in his own words, "don't know a damn thing about consumers and don't know a damn thing about farmers"?

There is one particular matter about which it is impossible for me and others to remain silent. This afternoon both the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) and the Minister of Agriculture pointed with great pride to their legislation dealing with capital gains tax and the family farm. This is not only humorless; it is sheer hypocrisy. In his original budget the Minister of Finance sold the Canadian farmer down the river, and the Minister of Agriculture went right down the same river but, sadly enough, didn't know he was on a trip. I challenge either one or both of these ministers to deny that had it not been for speaker after speaker from the opposition parties, the necessary amendments to cure this folly would never have been made.

The Minister of Finance did not know what he was doing. The Minister of Agriculture did not know he was doing it. The entire Liberal caucus, with the possible exception of the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher), did not care. And exactly the same thing happened with the retroactive capital gains taxation of farm marketing quotas. The Minister of Agriculture, instead of blaming opposition members for delaying, obstructing or filibustering, should thank his lucky stars that we bailed him out of these mistakes. This afternoon he said that the government could do better for the farmers if the opposition parties would help. Heaven would have to help the farmers if it were not for the opposition parties, Mr. Speaker.

Does the Minister of Agriculture think for one minute that we in the opposition are not alarmed by the cabinet's indifference to agricultural problems? Over and over again we hear from the minister that our problem is related to farm productivity, but at the same time he was strangely silent when imports of hatching eggs from the United States increased 30 per cent to 40 per cent this year at prices well below our farmers' costs of production. What has the minister said to or on behalf of hog breeders whose input costs are leading them to slaughter their breeding stock?

In fact I have yet to hear of one statement of the minister's that would give one glimmer of hope to the farmers as the biggest single consumer group in Canada. He has said nothing about energy costs, transportation costs, fuel costs, labour costs, or indeed about the whole range of input costs. It would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, singularly inappropriate in these times for the Minister of Agriculture to cast the blame for inflation wildly in all directions but at the same time to remain mute when