

Increased Cost of Living

al party and another party in this House were frightened of those political implications, so they zeroed in psychologically on food prices in order to move people's minds away from the real issue. But people's minds are on the subject because their pocketbooks are on it. We said this to parliament as early as last January and now, four months later, it has been proven that what we said was correct. What was needed was not parliamentary investigation but responsible government action.

We have put forward a concrete program and we refer to it in our motion. We have recommended a temporary freeze. My hon. friend from Davenport keeps asking what will happen after 90 days. During the 90 days there will be discussions with the provinces, with industry, with labour and with farm organizations.

Mr. Caccia: What happened in the United States?

Mr. Woolliams: My hon. friend asks what happened in the United States. I should like to quote what the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said. I must say the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) rather shocked me today, because I used to shadow his portfolio when he was minister of justice and I got to know him very well. He said that the price index increase in Canada was lower than that of any country in the western world. He had better get together with his Prime Minister; even he seems to be more honest. In answer to a question put by the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Hees), the Prime Minister said, as reported at page 3510 of *Hansard*:

I should like to tell the hon. member that in some countries which have applied price and wage controls the consumer price index has been increasing. It has been increasing in the United States at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 9.8 per cent in the past three months. On a year-over-year basis the increase in the consumer price index in Japan was 8.4 per cent, in Germany, 6.9 per cent, in France 7.0 per cent, in the United Kingdom, 8.2 per cent—

However, the Prime Minister admitted that the rise in the index in Canada over the same period was 13.2 per cent. Britain imposed temporary controls, and the United States has temporary controls. I say there is some record, at least, that they worked; they worked well while in operation. We put that forward as a concrete suggestion.

Before dealing with housing, one of the questions always raised by the Prime Minister—it must have been his favourite subject at university—is the constitution. For too long he has been hiding behind the constitution. I say that under the constitution the government has the power to act in order to implement a temporary freeze on all prices. Pausing there, as the hon. member for Don Valley said, we are living in the year 1973. During the first war, under the terms of peace, order and good government the federal government realized it had the power to stop galloping inflation and declared, not by act of Parliament or by changing the constitution but by judicial decision, that there was a national crisis. If we had a similar judicial interpretation today that there was a national crisis, any government in Canada under that formula would be able to implement some form of price control, particularly in the field of housing.

● (2030)

I am tired of this government.

[Mr. Woolliams.]

An hon. Member: The country is tired of it.

Mr. Woolliams: Yes, the country is tired of its always hiding behind the constitution.

Let me deal particularly with that subject the hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies) suggested would be raised in this debate, that is, housing. We have in Canada the most serious national housing crisis that has existed during my lifetime or the lifetime of any Member of Parliament sitting in this House. The index refers to a 6 per cent increase in housing. I made 10 or 15 phone calls across the nation today about this situation, and I found in talking with real estate people and those in the house construction business that costs have increased in the major cities in Canada from a low of 50 per cent to a whopping high of 100 per cent since the Trudeau gang took office. Believe me, the people of Canada have not forgotten that this is the same old gang running the country. It may try to create a new image and a new psychology, but its policies are the same. We have the same kind of unemployment, the same kind of inflation and the same bankruptcy of ideas. There has been no change.

An hon. Member: What about the Tory promises?

Mr. Woolliams: The hon. member talks like a seventeenth century economist. In the 1960s, those in the low-income group were able to buy houses in the major urban centres for much less than today. In 1968, a house with three bedrooms and a bathroom and a half cost approximately \$15,000. Today that same type of house, whether it is in Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto or Ottawa—there might be a slight difference—would cost \$30,000 to \$35,000. The cost has increased a whopping 100 per cent. I have checked the price of housing from Vancouver to Halifax and, speaking relatively, these increases have taken place on a pro rata basis. I repeat that the increase has ranged from 50 per cent to 100 per cent in the two cities that have the doubtful honour of suffering the highest increases as a result of this government's policies. In the city of Toronto the increase has been 100 per cent, and in the city of Ottawa it has been 80 per cent. These two cities lead the pack in the increase in housing costs.

This government has merely set up a review board to look at the price of food and investigate the causes of the increase, yet these terrific increases in the cost of housing have taken place. My friends on the other side are always asking for solutions. Let me remind them that the CMHC is guilty of instructing solicitors to commence more foreclosure actions than any other housing corporation in Canada. The leader of the NDP—I see him in the House—has made reference to corporate bums. This state-owned and controlled body, and I have the figures, today has instructed solicitors to foreclose on the little people across the land.

When reading the *Toronto Star* tonight I noted that spokesmen for that socialistic government agency said there were 260,000 homes in respect of which only 2 per cent of the owners were behind in their payments, and with respect to only 1 per cent foreclosure action has been taken. Even I, not being a mathematician, can figure out that 1 per cent of 260,000 is 2,600 homes across the country that are subject to foreclosure action.