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Cost of living and inflation attacked by new Government counter measures

In a statement to the House of Commons on September 4 the Prime Minister announced further measures to deal with the rising cost of living, food prices in particular and the problem of inflation. Excerpts from his speech follow:

...I shall discuss, first, measures to conserve and increase the supply of food. The Government, on June 29 last, placed soya, rape and flax seeds and their by-products under the control of the Export and Import Permits Act to protect our protein feed situation after the United States imposed their export embargo. Similarly temporary export controls on beef and pork were imposed on August 13 to safeguard meat supplies for Canadians against a rush of Canadian exports to the United States caused by trading and price distortions brought on by price controls in that country. A good supply of meat continues to be available in Canadian towns and cities and prices have dropped substantially following the Government action because of increased marketings coupled with some consumer resistance. The conclusion of the rail strike will further serve to reduce pricing anomalies. Export controls will last only as long as they are necessary to protect the food supply of Canadians, and are not intended to be a permanent instrument for supply control.

On a more long-term basis, the provinces have been invited to a ministerial-level conference in September to agree on principles and policies to encourage increased food production at reasonable returns to farmers. Increased food production in Canada, encouraged by measures to bring more stability and security of prices to producers, strikes at the heart of high food prices now being faced by consumers. Therefore, the Government is prepared to put in place measures such as higher support payments for agricultural commodities, advance payments on a wide range of agricultural products, commodity-oriented government-producer financed income stabilization programs and such other measures as might evolve after the September conference. There is no shortage of food in Canada now,

Mr. Speaker, and the Government will see to it that there is no artificial creation of scarcities.

Manpower training

Adequate farm manpower at times of peak need is critical to food supply, and if we are to increase production we must increase the availability of manpower. The Manpower and Immigration Department is preparing new and more effective arrangements for the recruitment training, deployment and housing of seasonal farm-workers. Additionally, wherever labour market bottlenecks may be contributing to rising costs, the Minister of Manpower and Immigration will conduct major efforts to ensure there is sufficient supply of skilled workers to meet demand....

Consumer protection

Following my statement of August 14, the terms of reference of the Food Prices Review Board have been extended so that from now on, it can investigate price increases in such or such commodity. Its staff has been strengthened: some experienced civil servants attached to its investigation section, are already busy detecting unwarrantable price increases. In addition, the research division and the administration services have been enlarged. The Government, I can assure this House, is anxious for the Board to be in a position to detect unjustifiable increases as well as those responsible for them and to lay them to an unrelenting publicity. If the Board points out glaring abuses which those responsible do not eliminate, the Government will resort to its powers to take the necessary steps. If it needs other powers, it will not hesitate to call on Parliament.

On the other hand, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs will