

assure the hon. member that there has always been a need for studies on nutrition and that we in Canada are a long way from the ultimate.

I must dispute, however, the validity of the hon. member's remarks regarding the failure to publicize the documents she has requested. I refer to *Hansard* of November 18, 1970, page 1280, where the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Gerome) made what is still a valid statement:

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture I may advise the hon. member that no formal report has ever been made by the Department of Agriculture on the United States internal food aid program and its application to Canada. An analysis of the program referred to was for departmental use and is considered to be confidential. I would therefore respectfully ask the hon. member to withdraw her motion.

You will note that an analysis is referred to here. I should like to point out that the analysis referred to by the hon. member was completed a few years ago and its purpose was to evaluate developments in this field in the United States to the extent that the Canadian government would have available for study knowledge or a data bank if and when any policy changes on this matter were contemplated. Thus, it is merely a collection of data and is not an official report. It was made readily accessible and is readily accessible, but from U.S. sources.

● (5:20 p.m.)

Some hypothetical models have been constructed, employing the data, but these models did not necessarily incorporate or speculate on government policy and as such are simply tools for an academic exercise of value only to economists themselves. I should like to point out that in order to construct these hypothetical models it was necessary to make assumptions with respect to programs. Thus, it is felt that while the study had been discussed with organizations outside the department it would not be in the public interest to table this analysis since the assumptions do not necessarily represent present or future government thinking on this subject.

I am confident, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member will agree that until notes and information used by economists and departmental members can be drawn up properly and put into a formal report, they should not be made available to be used in a manner which may or may not be related to government policy. That is why I suggest to the hon. member that the reason given by the parliamentary secretary is valid. I was delighted at the charitable approach taken by a member of the NDP toward United States plans and programs under way at present. I think this might be a step in the right direction. I do not think that has always been that party's approach.

May I say something about the internal food aid program. An internal food aid program is certainly pleasing to consumers. The program sounds good. But we must consider what will happen if we upset the economic balance of the country, because that would create real hardship for producers. We realize that consumers are well organized. Actually, Canadian consumers are much better organized than Canadian producers, and we must

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consider the plight of our producers. Even before the Prices and Incomes Commission was established, investigations were conducted relating to the internal operation of food distributors, processors and producers. People were charged under the Combines Investigation Act and there were court hearings. At no time, so far as I am aware, did evidence come out showing that profiteering took place within the food industry.

In this country it is not food that costs so much; it is the handling, distribution and packaging that costs a great deal of money. If I may say so, Mr. Speaker, packaging, pre-packaging, portion control, distribution and all those services which are available to the general public and to the consumer were not dreamed up by distributors and processors. These services came about as a result of demand from consumers such as the housewife who likes to be away from home in the afternoon, who likes her meat to be cut just the way she wants it, goods packaged in a certain way and displayed colourfully on the shelves.

The question of consumer acceptance is a most interesting study. On several occasions I have heard consumer organizations say that these services are not essential. Just tell that to the consumers, Mr. Speaker! The old system where the shopkeeper opened a drawer and shovelled out a pound or two of brown sugar, raisins or prunes and rushed around and put the items in a bag is just not acceptable. The additional cost of the services I mentioned is high, but the services have been requested by consumers. Ten cent discount operations to help the consumer have not been entirely successful. In some cases they have been almost disastrous. The recent price war engaged in by food chains which wanted to lower food prices to the consumer in eastern Canada very nearly ended in disaster. Also, it created a great many problems for small store operators.

It is true that in the United States they have taken a somewhat more positive approach to the internal distribution of food. The United States department of agriculture provides guidance with respect to nutrition. In Canada we provide a similar service through the teaching of home economics. The Department of Fisheries and other departments concerned with food provide a somewhat similar service.

May I now talk about the school lunch program, a program of this type that is probably best known. I have had the opportunity of being active on committees studying the school lunch program and I assure the House that it has not been very successful. Although the program has worked in some areas, in other areas it has not. There are many problems involved in providing school lunches or school breakfasts. However, the commodity distribution division and food stamp division of certain U.S. agencies appear to be making some headway in this regard.

In this country we have adopted a somewhat different approach because we have left the decision in this field more in the hands of the housewife, of the homemaker and of the consumer. We are providing housewives with family allowances designed to fill at least part of the food