

speech, but I want to tell her right now how much I appreciated her remarks when she spoke of the will to build a country more united and aware of the requirements of ethnic, female or other minorities in our country, Canada.

[English]

Canadians in all walks of life have long been quick to struggle for their interests as producers. As individuals and organized bodies we have fought to get what we consider our share of the country's increasing wealth. This continuing competitive struggle is one of the most time-consuming activities of our lives, and one of the most divisive so far as people are concerned. Only now are we discovering the importance attached to the fact that we are also consumers—not some of us, but all. The Stevens price spreads inquiry was probably our first parliamentary recognition of this discovery. Then, more than 30 years later, we had the 1967 inquiry into prices, mainly prices of food, as a result of which the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs was established.

We have a number of House of Commons standing committees to handle the special needs of various sectors of our economy, many of them being directly concerned with production. But it is interesting to note that up to this point all our efforts to get a consumer affairs committee have failed, in spite of the fact that all of the opposition parties and all the members of the food prices committee, even those on the government side of the House, strongly favour such a committee. I trust that we shall not go too far into this session of parliament before we get it.

The rising tide of indignation and despair from the consuming public regarding the spiralling cost of living is at last convincing the government that it is time to talk about the cost of living in the Speech from the Throne. In fact, the government has admitted by this throne speech that the issues of oil and food are the two most crucial ones so far as the consumer is concerned. I am not going to talk about the cost of oil or about the supply of oil; a number of my colleagues will be doing that. I am going to concentrate on the need for action with respect to the supply of food and the price of food. I want to say right now that no amount of talk in the throne speech will convince the consumers that they are going to be looked after unless the government very shortly introduces measures to do so.

In the Speech from the Throne we have this kind of talk:

The producer must be ensured a fair income for his work . . .

The consumer must be ensured a fair value from his dollar.

Those are fine words. In his speech on the address in reply, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) did a lot of tough talking. He said:

We will not allow corporate profiteers and gougers to pile up unearned windfall profits at the expense of the people of Canada.

I suggest that no amount of tough talk is going to exorcise the demon of rising food prices in this country. We must have tougher measures than we have had to date to deal with food prices. Just this afternoon my colleague from Toronto-Lakeshore pointed out that the government, having had a look at the Food Prices Review Board's report which found that the Bakery Council's projected increase for bread prices was unjustified and recommend-

ed that it be kept down to between one and two cents a loaf, is still unwilling to act and to do anything about it. The government is still going to stall by having more evidence brought before the Food Prices Review Board.

● (1740)

In view of the fact that the Food Prices Review Board has made its final report and the evidence is now in, it seems to me that this government has to explain to the people why the Prime Minister comes out with such tough talk about not allowing corporate profiteers and gougers to pile up unearned windfall profits at the expense of the people of Canada. Why does he talk like that if he is afraid to keep the price of a loaf of bread down by 2 cents?

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway):** Mr. Speaker, the consumer is not stupid. He or she may be a little slow to catch on, but they are learning fast and will be quick to notice the discrepancy. They will demand that the Prime Minister do more than talk a tough fight. It is time to fight where it is needed.

We in this party are glad to see that the government dealt with food in the Speech from the Throne. We are even more glad of all the measures this government has detailed to help the farmer increase the supply of food for this country and at the same time to gain a fair income for himself and his family. We are glad of those measures. Let nobody say that any of us is out to see that the consumer is allowed to profit at the expense of the farmer. But I speak as a consumer. Farmers and their families are also consumers of many things besides tractors, tractor fuel and farm supplies. They have to eat, just as city folk do. What is the use of the government just going far enough to protect the supply of food, to ensure a good supply of food and farm income, if it does not carry out the other part of what it says in the Speech from the Throne: the consumer must be assured of fair value for his dollar.

I have gone over the Speech from the Throne a number of times with a fine-tooth comb and can find nothing that will protect the consumer from being gouged and exploited along the links of the food chain which stand between the farm gate and the consumer. I find nothing whatsoever to protect the consumer in this regard. I do not think the consumer should be led astray on this point.

What is the point of ensuring that we get a continuously larger supply of food in this country, if at the same time the government is doing nothing to stop prices rising? The Prime Minister himself has indicated that prices are going to rise. The head of the Grocery Products Manufacturing Association says that prices will rise by 10 per cent in the coming year; the packagers are saying the same kind of thing, and so are the processors. What is the sense of taking measures to produce more food on the farm if nothing is done to protect the consumer from being gouged all the way from the farm gate to the table? What is the sense of taking measures to produce more food if nothing is being done to prevent that food being shipped to other countries in any amount simply because those who control it—I do not mean the primary producers—can get a higher price abroad than at home? I have the evidence from my own province to prove that.