

The strong exception taken by the C.C.F. group to this committee may have irked the government and hon. members opposite. This protest of ours is not a protest against the committee for what it may or may not do. Our protest—and we have made it as vehemently as possible—is against the policy of the government in not implementing measures immediately to stop the rapidly rising cost of living. It is because the committee which so far is the government's only answer, is just not good enough. It does not and it cannot meet the desperate needs of the situation of the people of Canada today. If the average Canadian were in this House of Commons this afternoon, or if he were speaking of the thing which is closest to him, I believe he would say this, through you, Mr. Speaker: "Please, Mr. King, what are you going to do right now to stop the rising cost of living?" The Canadian people know that a committee will not do it. As yet we have had no answer from the government or from any of its ministers as to what it intends to do now to stop the rising cost of living.

In his contribution to the debate the Minister of Justice (Mr. Ilesley) told us that subsidies were impossible at this time. My reply to him would be that he introduced a variety of subsidies during and since the war, and effectively prevented inflation in this country. He said that was an emergency. I should like to let him know there is an emergency in Canada today; and if the Canadian people have to make a choice between subsidies and unemployment or depression, they will be glad to have subsidies.

As this debate draws to a close the Prime Minister will rise in his place and Canada will be waiting for his answer. Doubtless he will berate this group for its protests; but that will not answer the question. The Canadian people want more than a parliamentary committee. We have a right to be informed that the government will do something to make it possible for the average man in this country to use his pay envelope so that it will bring to him and his family the things he requires for a proper living standard.

By way of constructive suggestion let me repeat one or two of the things which we think should be done to stop this rising cost of living.

First, we require proper fixed prices on essential articles of food, clothing, fuel and shelter. The basic necessities of the average home must be placed within the reach of the average breadwinner in Canada.

Second, I suggest closing the Winnipeg grain exchange, so that the value of feeds and

coarse grains will not fluctuate and wheat will not be allowed to go back on the grain exchange and be subject to constant fluctuations, thereby affecting the cost of living of the people of Canada.

Third, I suggest the restoration of the excess profits tax on all excess profits, so that the Canadian people will have the assurance that excessive profits are not being made by a few people while millions are forced to live in misery or without the necessities of life.

Such a program I understand will not be favourably received by those who had the privilege of grabbing all they could in a time when grabbing was good. But I suggest that this bare minimum is essential to meet the situation today, and it should be established until trade and production are restored at least to normal conditions.

The Prime Minister's answer to the Canadian people will be one of the most important statements he will make in his long public career. I hope he will not waste too much of his time berating those who oppose his ideas. I venture to say he will have the support of every thinking member of parliament from every part of the house if he outlines a program which will stop the rising cost of living. I can assure him that he will have vehement and continuous opposition from this group if he does not.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if this debate has served no other purpose, at least it has been a fairly satisfactory test of endurance; and I am happy to discover that at the end of one solid week of sitting in the house, listening to what has been said back and forth in the course of the debate, I have found it possible to hold my own with anyone in the house—which, I suggest, is not too bad for one in his seventy-fourth year.

May I say further it has been something of a test of patience. Here again I take a certain amount of satisfaction from the thought that I have been able to listen to what might almost be called a volume of vituperation at times, and yet have been able to refrain from saying anything disagreeable or nasty to those who were making remarks of that kind.

There is, however, this real satisfaction about the whole matter: What we have had to listen to is as nothing compared with what we would have had to listen to from hon. gentlemen opposite had someone on the other side suggested or had he moved that a committee be set up to inquire into the cost of living and the government had refused to