

Interim Supply

after the interests of important groups, and these groups have a department to speak for them. But who speaks for the consumers? Who represents them? Who represents them not just against the business community or the economy itself but against other government departments? All you have at the moment, Mr. Chairman, is a proliferation of small branches of each department devoting some of their time and attention to consumer matters. But nobody knows what the other is doing. There is no co-ordinated policy. In fact there is no policy at all in Ottawa in this particular area.

That is the first suggestion we have made and will continue to make. We also want to ask the government to set up a prices review board. A board of this nature should have the investigatory powers to examine price increases to see whether they are legitimate. Undoubtedly some price increases are, but such a board would have the power to look into price increases to see whether they are legitimate and to publicize widely its findings. So that while the consumer is getting rooked, at least he knows the extent to which he is being taken advantage of by these people who continue to raise prices. A prices review board would be an effective weapon at the present time.

Third, we should like to see some broad explanation given of the area covered by the Combines Investigation Act. At the present moment you can drive a 10-ton truck through most of the provisions of that act. It is a totally ineffective piece of legislation which should be completely redrawn and provided with a considerable amount of teeth in order to be effective in protecting the consumers of this country.

● (12:20 p.m.)

We could go into the whole field of consumer credit, as the hon. member for Prince Edward-Lennox has done, and as our select committee with the other place has been doing for two or three years. This is another area where the Canadian public is being gyped, extorted, rooked and taken advantage of. When you come to Ottawa, to the House of Commons, which is supposed to speak for the people, if you raise this problem, all you get is total inactivity and total indifference.

I hope we do not pass this supply motion right away. The high cost of living is working such hardships on the Canadian public that

we must get action, we must get some statement from this government. We cannot permit this situation to continue where week after week the cost of living rises, where the public is being subjected to greater and greater exploitation, and where there is total inactivity and indifference on the part of the government.

I appeal to hon. members of the back benches. I know they are concerned about this. Many of them have expressed their concern to me. Why are they not on their feet? Why are they not raising this matter in the house? Why are they not trying to protect the population of this country? Is this the new Liberal party? Is this the shift to the left that we have heard so much about?

Mr. Nielsen: The party that cares.

Mr. Scott (Danforth): The party that cares, was the slogan used. Is this the kind of activity we expect from that party?

I hope that the opposition exercises its traditional right of withholding supply, until we hear from the government as to what action it proposes to take in dealing with one of the most pressing problems that we face in Canada, namely the high cost of living, and the resultant hardships under which consumers are living.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Chairman, when the house was considering Bill No. C-178 on Wednesday it had been my intention to comment on the bill. I wanted to speak about the transfer of the Canadian Citizenship Act to the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State. Then when the bill, set aside for discussion yesterday, was rescheduled for Monday, that left me in the position of not being able to speak to it in the house on Monday, because of prior court commitments. Today, on interim supply, I am speaking on a subject that I intended to discuss under Bill C-178. That subject has to do with Canadian citizenship, and with the awarding of titles, and foreign decorations.

On November 3, 1964, the *Toronto Globe and Mail* carried this very interesting statement. The heading one column across is: "Greek Monarch Gives Lesage Phoenix Cross". I quote:

Athens (Reuters)—Premier Jean Lesage of Quebec yesterday was awarded the Grand Cross of the Royal Order of the Phoenix by King Constantine.

Mr. Lesage is on a short visit to Greece.

The cross was handed Mr. Lesage by Greek Foreign Minister Stavros Costopoulos when the Quebec Premier called on him to bid farewell. Mr. Lesage leaves Greece today for Vienna.