

ment, and that every attempt to have a look at it has been refuted and turned back by this just society government. Let me give you a few of the facts contained in that report which indicate precisely where the villain is.

This afternoon the hon. member for Calgary South (Mr. Mahoney), the Minister of State with some responsibility for financial affairs, took great pains to exonerate the chain stores, and well he might for this unpublished report of the Prices and Incomes Commission points out that the blame lies squarely on the government for its failure to come to grips with the increase in the cost of living. It says this increase is due to the rapid acceleration of government spending at an annual average rate of 14 per cent during the years 1965 to 1970. That is precisely the period of time when inflation has tended to get out of control. Let me present some further information from that unpublished report. It suggests there has been an increase in the weight of taxes over that period, an increase of an average 7.3 per cent per year per unit of real national output, reaching a peak of almost 10 per cent in 1969 when taxes accounted for more than the total inflation experienced during that year. The difference was made up by a sharp decline in corporate profits.

This report contains valuable information that should be made available to hon. members of the House. If we had that information before us this afternoon we would obviously have a much more realistic discussion. Under its terms of reference, the Prices and Incomes Commission has the responsibility of tabling that report, because that commission was not set up to protect the government from findings that are politically embarrassing. Obviously, the words I have referred to this afternoon indicate that if the report become available it would be embarrassing to the government. Before the Prices and Incomes Commission completes its lack-lustre career, it is on the way out and has overstayed its welcome now by several months, and is due to expire at the end of June—it should be allowed to make the report available to the people of Canada in order that we might have a reasonable appreciation of the real villain in respect of rising costs to consumers of basic products such as food.

There is one other point I should like to bring before the House before concluding my remarks this afternoon, and that is the failure of the government to bring a competition act before Parliament which would be acceptable to the people of Canada. Bill C-256 has had a checkered career. It has not yet reappeared on the order paper during the current session of Parliament. If we could get a competition act which would deal with the villains behind the scenes, causing outrageous increases in the price of food, we would not have to call together a special committee of the House of Commons, as this motion suggests. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andras) has promised a competition act which would help to keep the economy of Canada on a stable basis. The sooner the government moves to deal with this problem, the sooner we will have the fires of inflation under control and the sooner the people of Canada will have an assurance that the value of their dollar will be maintained at a reasonable level for a reasonably long period of time.

With the addition of commissions and administrations designed to deal with rising costs, and the creation of the

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Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the government promised to take care of the interests of the consumer. This produced a psychological attitude towards buying on the part of the public of Canada, which I think has helped to aggravate the problem rather than resolve it. Private consumer groups in this country are doing a good job in attempting to protect the rights of consumers. I should like therefore to put before this House a few suggestions the government might consider in respect of this consumer philosophy. I think the adoption of these suggestions would prove effective.

• (1720)

The government should consult with all groups and associations interested in consumer affairs. It should assist the Consumer Council of Canada to become a truly effective advisory body to the government. It should publish reports of the Consumer Council and make them readily available to the public. The government should more clearly define the role of the Consumer Council to make it more active in establishing the rights of the consumer and in recommending specific ways the government could act to establish these rights. It should make more use of the mass media in making the Canadian consumer aware of consumer laws and regulations. It should establish national standards of safety and ensure that all products for sale in Canada meet these standards. If the government would use the Consumer Affairs Department, which it has established at such exorbitant expense, then perhaps we could come to grips with some of the problems which have been outlined here today.

Mr. E. F. Whelan (Essex): Mr. Speaker, both as a producer and a consumer, I thought I should take part in the debate today. I believe one of the greatest misunderstandings Canadians have is that they spend too much of their earnings on food. Great emphasis is placed on this portion of their cost of living. Every time Statistics Canada releases figures, the news media are quick to point out how much the index has risen in respect of food prices. I have in my hand a recent United States publication. It is headed "What Farmers want you to know about" and explains the cost to the consuming public as well as how much the producers receive for producing tremendously high quality food. It reads:

Is your family eating meals that rate fair to poor by government nutritional standards? One out of two consumers does every day. And high-income families average less food value for their money than low-income families.

One of the greatest misconceptions people have is that the people who earn the most money have the most nutritious and healthy diet. It has been proven by studies that this is not true. The publication continues:

Half of the people in the U.S. are getting diets that are rated fair or poor by the National Research Council. A USDA survey shows the U.S. family diets aren't even as good as they were 15 years ago!

Why? There's a variety of reasons. It may be due to dieting; or snacking; or eating out more. But you can do any or all of these things and still have a nutritious diet by making a balanced selection from America's abundant supply of food.

Calcium, iron, thiamin, riboflavin and vitamin A are the nutrients which most often fall below the recommended level. Except possibly for iron, all are readily available in a balanced diet of meats, milk, vegetables, fruits, eggs and cereal products.