

The Address—Mr. St. Laurent

government has been looked upon as frank and fair and as trying to do a good job. I do not think it would be right for us to put before the public anything we ourselves did not believe in. It is human for us to make mistakes, but they must be honest mistakes. I think it would be wrong for us to try to put into effect measures that would turn out to be mistaken, and that we ourselves did not believe in when putting them before the public. That is something this government does not intend to do.

They have not been able to do it in the United States, any more than they have been able to do it in the United Kingdom. The hon. member for Rosetown-Biggar (Mr. Coldwell), in a recent broadcast, said that they had put into effect more efficient controls—I am not using his exact words, but I hope I am correctly paraphrasing them—more efficient controls than they had in effect during most of the time during the last war. Well, that does not speak very highly for those which were in effect during the last war—if we are to judge them by their effect on prices at the present time.

There has been an assertion that the Bank of Canada admitted in its July publication that the cost of living in Canada had become higher than the cost of living in the United States. Well, that was the interpretation put upon it by the Canadian Press—"Canada's living costs higher than U.S.; Bank of Canada survey shows reversal of historic pattern". And the leader of the opposition has asserted that we now have inflation in this country to a greater degree than they have in the United States.

Well, I asked to be shown just what this Canadian Press dispatch was based upon, and I found that it was based upon a diagram of cost of living indexes where, for the first time, the Canadian curve crossed the American curve.

These cost of living indexes are based on statistics showing changes in prices; but they are not exactly the same thing as the actual cost of living. Some say that they do not reflect the whole cost of living, while others say that they do show more than the actual cost of living. That is a matter of opinion. But, whatever one's opinion may be in the matter, the fact is that the housewife does not support her family upon a cost of living index: she supports her family upon what she pays in the shops for the articles she has to buy.

Now, from a distance pastures always look green. However, I happened to be in Washington on September 28. I had gone down to that city to confer with the President of the United States about the measure that it

might be proper to put on foot to try to bring about speedy development of the St. Lawrence waterway. Naturally, I picked up a Washington newspaper. As a matter of fact, I brought it back with me.

This paper showed the ceilings that were going into effect in the United States on their beef prices on October 1. Those are the prices in effect, with the direct controls that have been resorted to in the United States. I am told there are others charged on the black market which go beyond these prices. These, however, are the prices authorized by government action. They dealt with retail stores, groups 1 and 2; retail stores, groups 3 and 4, and certain small stores; and then retail stores groups 3-B and 4-B, which include supermarkets, chains and independents. This latter group has lower ceilings because it provides less service than do the other shops.

The first item shows porterhouse steak at \$1.34 a pound; tenderloin, \$1.81 a pound; sirloin, boneless, \$1.34. Well, I do not do the marketing myself. But I have a family, in which there are representatives of three generations, from whom I hear something about the high prices that have to be paid. I know that none of them is paying those prices.

I picked up a paper in Ottawa last week. This happened to be a copy of the *Ottawa Citizen*, and in it I found advertised porterhouse steak, with the cuttings taken off, at \$1.05 a pound, instead of the \$1.34 set out in the Washington paper. Those are the actual prices which prevail.

On another page of that issue of the *Washington Post* of September 28, there was a news item stating that the price of grade A milk was to be raised one cent a quart on the following Monday, with three dairies fixing the price at 23½ cents a quart. That is for the American quart, which is about one-fifth less in volume than ours. That means that the price would be more than 28 cents for an imperial quart of milk.

I find upon inquiries made through our consular office in New York that the prices there are a little higher even than those indicated for the A & P, Safeway and Supermarkets in Washington. I found that while the retail price was 23½ cents for an American quart at the A & P supermarket at 2141 Wisconsin avenue on October 2, 1951, or the equivalent of 28 cents for an imperial quart, the price prevailing on October 12 at an A & P store here in Ottawa was 19 cents for an imperial quart. It may be 20 cents now; I understand there has been a move to add an additional cent to the price. However, it was 19 cents on October 12.

[Mr. St. Laurent.]