

Hon. members cannot convince me, however, that the Chair should disregard a practice which has existed over many years, probably for more than a hundred years. Hon. members may say that to recommend a course of action to the House is only a recommendation and that the government is not bound by it. My recollection is that just a few years ago, when the House adopted a report which recommended a certain course of action and when the government, in its wisdom, or lack of wisdom, depending on which side of the House hon. members sit, did not take action as recommended—and I insist on that word—by the committee, there were suggestions that the government was in contempt of the House and that the word “recommend” could not be used in the sense given to it by the hon. member for Peace River, but that the course of action in question had become an order of the House to which the government was required to adhere. That is, I suggest, the difficulty when we come to the expenditure of money.

It is fundamental to the parliamentary system that financial initiative belongs to the Crown and I think it is going around this well-established practice to suggest that after a committee has recommended an expenditure of money the House can approve a report from the committee and then consider that an order has been made, which the government must obey, that certain sums of money in respect of which there has been no recommendation, should be expended. That is the problem. It is as simple as that.

Hon. members have referred to precedents. I have looked at precedents also, with the assistance of the Clerk at the table, and there are very few real precedents which would support the position adopted by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Peace River. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre referred to a very recent precedent, a precedent involving a recommendation for the expenditure of money which was included in a report of the Committee on Veterans Affairs as reported in the Journals of the House for June 22 and June 23, 1970. It should be noted that what we were considering then was a report which was dealt with by unanimous consent. The motion read:

That the notice standing in the name of the hon. member for Ottawa West with respect to concurrence in the second report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs be considered and that the question be put on the same without debate.

That, I think, indicates why there was no occasion to raise the point of order. I do not intend to go into the matter further, but I still suggest to hon. members that there is virtue in respecting long-established precedents. It is a long-established practice of this House that recommendations coming from a committee and requiring expenditure of money include the traditional words that the government give consideration to the advisability of spending moneys, and hon. members should give serious thought to having these magic words included in their committee reports when such recommendations are made.

This having been said, we are dealing with only one aspect of this report, as I mentioned the other day, and I would think there is anxiety, a determination on the part of all members, to proceed immediately to the consideration of this very important report, and if hon. members

### *Food Prices*

are satisfied, or half satisfied, with the comments I have made, I will now put the motion which stands in the name of the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway.

The hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis), seconded by Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre) moves:

That the first report of the Special Committee on Trends in Food Prices, presented to the House on April 2, 1973, be concurred in.

**Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure every member of the Committee on Trends in Food Prices has been wishing that while we were drafting the precise terms of our report we had been able to benefit from your wisdom, because it might have saved us from straying into danger along the way. I do not think we ever forget to be grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for the impartial and fearless way in which you uphold the traditions and liberties of this House.

It gives me satisfaction to be able to move this motion to concur in the interim report of the Committee on Trends in Food Prices for a number of reasons. We have put in a great deal of hard work during the two months we have been working on the preparation of this report. But the thing that gives me satisfaction is that at long last we have raised the question of food prices and the whole system by which food is brought to the people in a manner worthy of the attention and consideration of this House. In my opinion it is not a moment too soon. All across the country people are desperately concerned with what is happening to food prices, and they have been told by authorities of all kinds that no end to the process is in sight. I am glad that we are able to discuss this report here, since people expect that we as a parliament are able to do something to prevent the everlasting escalation of the price of those things people must have to survive.

• (1550)

The members of this party are not displaying a sudden interest in this matter. Last June when food prices were rising twice as fast as the general cost of living, the New Democratic Party tried to get parliament to set up a special committee to investigate food prices. On behalf of this party, on June 1 last year I moved such a motion. The motion was debated for one day and then roundly defeated in a recorded vote. But by the late fall the picture had changed somewhat. Prices were still escalating, but a minority government had been elected and there was a much greater disposition on the part of that government to consider certain matters that it had not considered necessary to deal with before.

The position of the New Democratic Party was firm and solid. We had prepared a shopping list of those items that we considered vital to the Canadian people and on which we felt action must be taken by this administration if we were to be able to support it for the duration of the time the action was forthcoming. Very high on this shopping list of ours were some steps to stop the rising cost of living, particularly the price of food. At that time we specifically recommended that there be a prices review board. Again, this was nothing new for us; that had been a cornerstone of our policy on food prices for at least five years. When parliament met on January 4 of this year we