

chasing power away from certain groups and give it to others by way of social security programs.

A second measure which has been introduced is provision for a cost of living increase in the programs I have mentioned so that those who live on fixed incomes have a chance to keep up with increases in the cost of living through regular adjustments. Another measure is one which was announced recently, the setting up of a prices review board. I am looking forward to seeing how this will work. I really do not know whether it will be able to achieve the objectives the public expects it to achieve. Perhaps it will only serve the purpose of emphasizing the complexity of this issue.

Another measure which is still to come is the introduction of really effective legislation in the field of monopolies, keeping monopolistic trends to a minimum and, if possible, eliminating the fixing of prices. Then, I suppose—and this can be done in several ways through our agricultural policies—we might introduce incentives designed to increase the supply of certain products. I recall a lengthy debate which took place in this chamber until seven in the morning. It was on the introduction of agricultural marketing boards. Members of the Conservative party were strongly opposed to these boards. Do they still think it was such a bad idea? Would they still be opposed to that measure, now that two years have gone? If so, why?

Sometimes memories in this chamber are very short, but it does no harm to raise these matters. I do not know what the answers are to the issues. I am Socratic; I do not know. But I do know the Canadian people are very disturbed by this trend. They want to have correct political answers, sound answers which will stand the test of time—not temporary measures which will serve merely as window-dressing.

In conclusion, since it is they who have introduced this motion I believe it is the responsibility of the Conservative party to tell us what will be done when the temporary freeze comes to an end. Will they renew the freeze for another few months? Having done so, what will they do next? How are they going to enable those sectors of society that are trying to catch up with other sectors to improve their lot, their wages and conditions? How will they deal with inflation which is imported into Canada from other parts of the world? Unless they can, the exercise here today will only have raised false hopes. It seems to me that we can do better than that.

● (2020)

**Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North):** Mr. Speaker, this is one of those days when, under the rules, the opposition is assigned the right to raise certain grievances. To put the debate on the tracks, as it were, may I refer in my introductory remarks to the motion. We have asked the House to deplore the failure of the government to take concrete and effective action against the rising cost of living so evident in the price of shelter—which I shall deal with in a moment—food and clothing. We urge the government to come forward and impose an immediate temporary freeze on the price of shelter, food and clothing and to hold discussions within 90 days—a factor my hon. friend from Davenport (Mr. Caccia) seemed to miss—with the

### *Increased Cost of Living*

provinces, industry and labour and come up with some plan to stop the ever-increasing, galloping inflation.

Having listened to the speech of the previous speaker, if I may refer to it for a moment, I took the position that the hon. member had thrown up his hands. He is speaking for the Liberal party, but really he is a Liberal back, not in the nineteenth or the eighteenth century but in the seventeenth century—laissez-faire, let it go. On the one hand he cried about people on small salaries, and on the other hand talked about people with larger incomes. What he was really saying was that there was no revenue.

This parliament has already approved an increase in the old age pension, we have approved an increase in the exemptions of small wage earners, we have improved the pensions of veterans—but by the time the cheques got into the envelopes the inflationary spiral had eaten up the increases granted. The government knows that and the Canadian people know it.

When we came to this House four months ago I do not know whether the government had great hopes, but their only remedy to cure high prices was to set up a special committee to investigate food prices. That special committee recommended that we set up a food and prices review board. I agree with the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis), who in turn agreed with our member who led off this debate, the hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies), and also the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) that this board will be useless. It is only an excuse for inaction. It really means more procrastination while Canadians suffer.

I could not help but agree with the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway who spoke before supper. After all, this lady is a great parliamentarian of great capacity. She has a feeling for humanity and an understanding, following the tradition of her great father and parliamentarian in this institution. She has been influenced by socialists. This influence must come from her leader and other members of her party. She said that this review board will mean nothing but further procrastination, and there she let the cat out of the bag as far as her party is concerned. She knew this review board would be useless.

We said that a committee that would study the cause of price increases would be useless. This is merely hoping that something will turn up, like Micawber. The Canadian people knew that the cost of living was high. They knew the cost of food was high, and so are rents. Housing is expensive, as is clothing. They know their pay cheques will not meet the demands of their families. They know that now. They also know that prices will go higher because the government has no remedy. This government is bankrupt of ideas.

I was one who criticized the setting up of this committee, not only because I knew its recommendations would not solve the ball of wax of inflation but also because it was too narrow in purpose. The committee was set up to study food prices only. One wonders why it was restricted to that aspect alone, since the cost of living is rising, as is the cost of housing and shelter, which I will deal with in a moment, and clothing. Only last night I read that the cost of clothing during the next few months will go up 50 per cent. So why were just food prices picked out? I think the reason is that there were political implications. The Liber-