

The Budget—Mr. Fraser

ing prices down. Every time I hear them praise themselves for that, it reminds me of the story I heard some time ago of a woman who went down the street to shop. She was walking along when she came to a sign in a store window that said "Bananas, seven cents a pound." She went into the store and asked for five pounds of bananas. The storekeeper said, "Sorry, madam; we have no bananas to-day." So she went two blocks down the street and in another store window saw a sign "Bananas, twenty-seven cents a pound." She went into the store and asked the storekeeper, "Why are your bananas twenty-seven cents a pound when up the street they are only seven cents a pound?" The storekeeper asked her, "Why didn't you buy some at seven cents a pound?" The woman replied, "The storekeeper didn't have any." "Well, lady," the storekeeper said, "if I didn't have any bananas I, too, would sell them at seven cents a pound." That is how our cost of living index is based. It is based on what we have not instead of on what we have.

Mr. ILSLEY: That is not correct.

Mr. FRASER: The minister says that is not correct, but I have here from the dominion bureau of statistics a list of the items on which the cost of living is based. I will read the accompanying letter, which is dated June 28, 1946:

I am pleased to enclose a mimeographed explanatory statement regarding dominion bureau of statistics cost of living index numbers. A complete list of items which are priced in connection with this series is included.

Yours very truly,

H. Marshall,
Dominion Statistician.

I will read a few items from the list: Raisins, currants, prunes. Any housewife in Canada will tell you that they are almost impossible to get. Strawberry jam and marmalade. They are on the rationed list. Canned peaches. Has the minister had any canned peaches or canned fruit of any kind lately? I doubt it. You cannot buy it in the stores but it is on this list. That is what this cost of living is based on.

Mr. ILSLEY: What are the other items?

Mr. FRASER: I will give the rest. Coal. Try to get it. Electricity. The price of that has not gone up but there is an eight per cent tax on consumption. Topcoats for men. Try to get a topcoat. Suits for men—try to get one.

An hon. MEMBER: Shirts.

Mr. FRASER: There are no suits even for men who have priorities. The veterans have an extremely tough time to get any, and they

[Mr. Fraser.]

wait for months. Socks. I wrote the minister about socks for children; it was last fall that I was inquiring about long socks for children six to twelve years of age. We had children in Peterborough who could not go to school because socks could not be bought in the stores. I was down the street the other day trying to buy a pair of socks for myself, and I was told that they were not to be had. An hon. member to my left mentioned shirts. On the list here they have "shirts, broadcloth"; that is nothing but a laugh, for broadcloth shirts cannot be had. We can get fancy sport shirts, but not white shirts or broadcloth shirts. Women's wear is up to at least double the price.

Of dairy products we have on this list milk, which is subsidized; butter, which is rationed; cheese, which is in very short supply. Then meats: a long list of meats is given, and at the bottom we have bacon. If you want half or a quarter pound of bacon, when you go to the butcher shop you have to get the butcher on the side and whisper to him, and if you are lucky and have done good business with him you may get half a pound, but you will get it only once in two or three weeks. Fish is four times the 1920 price. Lard, it is almost impossible to buy. We are told that we must cut the consumption of bread. Rice cannot be bought. Rolled oats have not gone up in price, the reason being, I believe, that they are made in Peterborough. Then follows granulated sugar and yellow sugar, which also are rationed. Canned tomatoes are on this list, and we may get tomatoes here in the parliamentary restaurant, but the ordinary housewife cannot buy them.

To-day Canada, instead of being a land of plenty, is a land of scarcity. Over the week-end two farmers called at my place asking where they could buy nails to help to build barns. The veterans cannot get nails to build their homes; and the homes which have been built for the veterans by the department are so expensive that the veterans are paying through the nose for them.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Vancouver North): Does the hon. member say that \$23 a month is paying through the nose?

Mr. FRASER: If the hon. member would wait until I have finished he might not be in the mood to chirp up so quickly.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Vancouver North): A home for a veteran at \$23 a month is very reasonable.

Mr. FRASER: Just a minute. On the Queensway project for the veterans the houses run \$6,900 apiece.