

expansion of available retail price statistics along these lines will require additional resources, both in the collection of price data and in its evaluation, processing and analysis. A good deal of information on various aspects of consumer prices is published by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics but it is not usually easily available to the consumer. The consumer appears to be less well served in this respect than some other groups in the community. For example, her ability to detect seasonal and other trends in food prices is impaired by a lack of information. Your Committee recognizes that there are technical problems in compiling accurate price statistics but nevertheless believes that it is an appropriate governmental function to disseminate price information as widely as possible to the consuming public.

Although your Committee's primary concern was with prices, it necessarily became involved on several occasions with other kinds of economic statistics. Specific evidence was given, notably by the Chairman of the Economic Council of Canada, that there were serious deficiencies in the government system of collecting, analyzing and issuing statistics relating to economic conditions. Moreover, your Committee was impressed by the urgent need for comprehensive, accurate and timely statistics in the formulation of government economic and fiscal policy. Because of the importance of having good and current information about short-run economic changes, your Committee proposes that a detailed review of the government statistical system be undertaken with a view to modernizing, improving and co-ordinating the whole process of collecting and compiling economic data.

Recommendations:

- (a) That additional staff resources be provided to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics to improve the collection of urgently needed statistical information on price movements.
- (b) That more information concerning consumer prices be made available to the public in as simplified a form as possible.
- (c) That a thorough review be made of the governmental system of collecting, analyzing and issuing other types of economic statistics in addition to price statistics.

4. Parliamentary Responsibility for Consumer Affairs

The experience in Canada and in many other western countries demonstrates the need for Parliament to be informed on both general and specific economic developments. Economics cannot properly be the exclusive province of experts, even though it has aspects which are technically complex. The study of particular legislation or special problems by ad hoc parliamentary committees does not meet the continuing need of Parliament to become familiar with the issues of current economic policy. For this reason, your Committee has concluded that it would be desirable to establish a Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons whose primary aim would be to keep under continuous review the whole field of consumer affairs. In addition to this, the proposed Committee should have the responsibility for surveying economic developments in the Canadian economy which affect employment, income and consumption levels. A Committee of Parliament would be immediately responsive to parliamentary or public concern over problems affecting the consumer.