

kept stabilized at least to some extent, and the cost to the consumer was kept within the reach of the average man's pay envelope. The government waited until the prairie farmers, who grow a large part of Canada's coarse grain, had delivered most of those coarse grains, I believe some 39,000,000 bushels of barley and millions of bushels of oats. Then suddenly the authorities at Ottawa removed the subsidies and turned over control of the prices of coarse grains to be set by the gambling on the Winnipeg grain exchange. Within a couple of weeks prices of these feed grains had increased ten, twenty, thirty, thirty-five cents a bushel, and those prices are still fluctuating to the detriment of both the consumer and the producer.

What was the effect of this action on the part of the government? The feed companies and the grain companies, who had purchased the grain at the lower price, by manipulating the market were able to pocket the difference. The feed companies, which had bought the grain at the lower prices, were now able to charge the increased prices for the feed they sold. As a result we hear such protests as that made last evening by the hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Cruickshank), who told us that the price of feed for poultry had doubled while the selling price of eggs had been reduced by about twenty cents per doz. The net result, as far as Canada was concerned, necessarily was that since it costs more to feed cattle and poultry it costs more to produce milk, butter and eggs. So the cost of these things to the Canadian consumer had to jump, and the cost of living rose tremendously right across the country with regard to foods which are the basis of the nutrition and health of the people of Canada. The farmer who produced the coarse grains and sold before the price increase naturally lost.

The Canadian people are demanding that the Winnipeg grain exchange be closed, and that gambling in foods be stopped. It is costing the Canadian people too much. I think every member of our group has received resolutions from the Saskatchewan wheat pool committees at various points asking for the closing of the exchange. Canada cannot afford it.

Members of this house have complained about these costs. The Canadian people, and rightly so, expect effective action in regard to the rising cost of living; and they want that action now. Six months from now it may be too late. The Canadian people went through one depression. We feel we cannot protest too vehemently against any delay; and we believe that setting up this committee can only bring about a delay in essential action.

[Mr. Castleden.]

The greatest danger from a continuation of the present policy is that Canadian income will continue to be inadequate to purchase the production of this country. When production declines, firms will start laying off employees, and unemployment will further aggravate the situation. The purchasing power of the Canadian people, reduced time and again, ultimately will bring about a depression. I am sure every thinking Canadian would do anything he could to avoid a repetition of the thirties. If that is to be done this price trend will have to be halted, so that purchasing power will remain in the pockets of the Canadian people. I repeat that the present situation is desperate, and though its full effect has not been felt as yet, effective action to cure it must be taken now.

In the face of this situation we came to Ottawa and the house reopened on January 26. What did we find? We were told the government proposed to set up a committee. Well, Mr. Speaker, a committee can investigate; it can cross-examine witnesses; it may even expose some profiteering. For several months it will meet frequently; it will hear government officials whose evidence will cover many pages in an endeavour to vindicate government policy. If representatives of large firms are brought to give evidence they will bring with them mountainous briefs prepared by highly paid legal advisers and chartered accountants. We are told that we will find some facts, that the proceedings of the committee will give publicity to the actions of the evil doers. The Prime Minister informed us that he thought publicity was much more valuable than penalties.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I should like to inform the government and the people responsible for the proposed committee that valuable as it may be in determining the ultimate policy and actions of the government, that type of investigation is not what the people of Canada want. What they want is action within the next few weeks. They are deeply interested in having the cost of living reduced to a point where they can all live better on the pay envelopes they bring home each week. A committee is simply not the machinery which will bring those costs down. It is not enough.

Someone has suggested that this might be a fishing expedition. Well, in a fishing expedition a fishing pole might be a valuable instrument. But what the people of Canada want is more action taken now which will put coal in their basements and food in their cupboards. That cannot be done with a fishing pole. They want the cost of living brought within the range of their pocketbooks.