

Food Prices

And the price of bread has in fact increased.

The price of bread is expected to increase by six cents—

—it happened two weeks ago,—

—next week—

—three weeks ago, she told—

—and by four . . . cents in October.

"If we could get the federal government and the provinces to really examine the situation, we would perhaps have some results", Mrs. Plumptre said,—

In fact, some results were obtained since her statement.

—which claims for the government to adopt a policy concerning the storage of feed for cattle and a policy of "stabilization of reserves".

The first report of the board, Mrs. Plumptre noted, indicates some concern about people who are below poverty level. The government, she regrets—

Below poverty level, this means that when a dozen eggs sell for 99 cents—I bought one last week—those who earn \$4,000 a year pay 99 cents just like the hon. member who earns \$26,000. It is the same price for everyone. So, those who live below poverty level cannot eat eggs by the dozen too often, of course, because their income does not enable them to do so. I will come to my solution later.

I go on quoting:

—The government, she regrets, could have done something about family allowances—

This will be done by the first of October. Why? Because pressures are made on the government.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said during the weekend, at the Liberal convention, that the government takes its responsibilities; yes, but why did it not take them when it had 156 supporters in this House? Why did it not increase family allowances three years ago instead of waiting till 1973? Why did we not increase the old age pensions? Because the government was feeling strong. In fact, with 156 members in Parliament, it was personified arrogance. With fewer members, the minority government has to come and see us from time to time and say: Listen, it might be dangerous; there will be a vote, would it not be possible to save us? I am willing to save the government, inasmuch as it does something to save the population. If it is not willing to do so, I am not willing to save it. That is for sure.

Family allowances—anyhow will be increased on October 1 and so will old age pensions.

I resume quoting:

What about poor people with many children?

I said it recently; the old age security pensions will be increased and a couple will get \$341.80 a month; that makes more sense than \$180.

However, mothers with five or six children receive social welfare benefits of \$150 or \$160 a month. But the government does not mention this. It does not talk about the people who really need help. Old people need help, but the blind, the invalid, those who cannot work to earn a living and needy mothers need more than they receive at the present time and the government does not act. But we need have no fear, Mr. Speaker, it will act because it is scared and fear is the beginning of wisdom. When a gov-

[Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue).]

ernment is afraid to lose its power, hop! it relaxes a bit and adjusts to the situation.

What happens to the poor? We know what happens. I shall go on with the quotation:

● (1720)

She is not afraid of criticism. "If the government decides to dismiss me, I do not care—

She is not afraid of the government, even though she is chairman of the board!

What is important is that I do my best. If people are not satisfied, that is too bad."

She states the facts as they are.

Then, Mr. Speaker, it is not only a matter of bread and milk. Let us consider the price of eggs which, I said a moment ago, is 99 cents a dozen. This does not make sense; meat—everyone is complaining about it—is prohibitive. It is so prohibitive that almost everywhere horse meat is substituted for beef. Butchers are selling horse meat pretending it is beef so that they can make more profit because beef is beyond reach. I do not say that horse meat is not good, but I would not eat it, even though I am convinced that I have been served such meat without my knowledge. That is the honest treatment of the consumers by the food business.

Mr. Speaker, it is the same thing for milk, bread, canned foods; fruit and vegetables are quite expensive. Recently, on Mr. Jarraud's program on Montreal CKVL station from 7 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. I heard a farmer say over the phone that he has a 12 acre field of carrots and has no one to pick them. That man was losing 12 acres of carrots on his land. In other cases, it is tomatoes or apples.

We all know of the predicament of the apple growers in the Montreal area. They find it hard to recruit apple pickers. So they brought in Jamaicans. And I read in a morning paper that the federal government decided to pay transportation costs with the agreement of apple growers. The federal government is going all out. I do not object to hire Jamaican workers but how much more would it cost to say to welfare or unemployment insurance benefits recipients in Montreal: "Gentlemen, for four or five weeks, go and pick apples, and you will continue receiving your allowances or unemployment benefits". At the present time, they receive and they do not do anything. If we paid them a salary as surplus money, this would encourage them and we would have all kinds of manpower.

But no! If an unemployed decides to go on a farm and pick apples, they stop paying his benefits. He works four or five weeks, and then he stops working; he is again out of work, all the apples have been picked. Then, he goes back to the Unemployment Insurance Commission office, and is told by some official: Sir, you have not worked 8 weeks; therefore, you are not entitled to receive benefits anymore. So, the individual who has stopped drawing unemployment insurance benefits in order to go to work is penalized precisely because he went to work. And the minister says: This is the law. Well, it is a foolish law, Mr. Speaker.

The same applies to welfare recipients. They are caught working and are told: You rascals! You made so bold as to go to work. No more allowances for you! And when the