

we must investigate very thoroughly in studying the price of food to the consumer. Some of these areas include the processing and the packaging of food, which has become very elaborate and expensive in the past few years. We must investigate in depth the distribution of food in this country, its transportation and freight rate costs. For some of us on the Prairies this is a very important factor because we feel we are often discriminated against, in terms of freight rates, to the benefit of some industries in central Canada.

We must investigate very thoroughly the advertising and promotional costs which go into the food industry today and look at much of the advertising gimmicks in the advertising of food. We must take a very close look at the conglomerate structure of the food industry in this country, at chain stores, at the profit these chain stores are making, at the proliferation of many supermarkets in the suburbs where you have on one street a supermarket and on the next corner another supermarket. Often the space in the supermarkets is not utilized to its fullest capacity; this means an additional cost to the consumer who shops for his groceries. These are just a few of the things the committee should investigate if we are to get to the crux of the problem regarding food prices in this country.

We must look, as well, at the lack of competition, at some of the huge near-monopolies such as the Garfield-Weston Company that has a controlling interest in about 60 companies in this country which are producing food. While we are doing this, we must make very clear that what we are looking at is the profits on equity investment rather than the profit on sales. I know that the leader of my party, when speaking in the House last week, referred to the example of Dominion Stores who say they make a profit of only .6 per cent on sales. When we look at the equity investment, we find that their profit is really some 11 per cent—and that is what counts when we look at the cost of food to the consumer in this country.

I believe it was either the Batten report or the report of another study which said that the profits reaped by food wholesalers and retailers are often above the profits reaped by wholesalers and retailers in other industries. In 1968 food retailers had a profit of 17.5 per cent. Food wholesalers had a profit of 19.5 per cent in the same year. These are the areas which we should study when we consider the price of food in this country.

I now want to urge upon hon. members, especially those who will be members of the committee, that one of the recommendations which we surely must make if we are to achieve anything in this area is one calling for the establishment of a prices review board, as suggested by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway earlier this afternoon. This prices review board must, when there is a huge jump in the price of food, have the power to demand that the company justify the increase and if it is not justified the board must have the power to control the price or, indeed, at times to roll it back. When I talk about justifying the price of food I am talking, first of all, about giving the farmer a fair deal as well as giving a fair deal to those who work in the food industry. I refer primarily to the close scrutiny which we should give to the middleman in the food industry.

Food Prices Committee

I now want to say a word or two about the amendment that was moved in the House earlier by the spokesman for the Conservative Party regarding the exclusion of members of the Senate from the membership of this committee. I wonder how sincere the Conservative party is in wishing to abolish the Senate in this country, and whether it is just a move at this time—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) rises on a point of order.

Mr. Baldwin: I know the hon. member does not mean it, but I do not think it is allowable for an hon. member to reflect on the motives of other hon. members. Of course, our motives are always well known and they are always perfectly honourable.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: Read your own speech about us.

Mr. Baldwin: The hon. member cannot comment on the motives which prompted the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) to move his motion. They are there and they speak for themselves.

Mr. Howard: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might speak on the point of order that has been raised by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) and say to him that it is not necessary to comment on the motives of the Conservative party; we know that they are—they are ulterior and selfish.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think the points that have been raised and the language that has been used are not outside the realm of debate in this chamber. However, I do not think a point or order was raised.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard), who has certainly departed from parliamentary practice. I must say that a party which, at least in the number of years that I have been here, has continually moved motions which have no chance of succeeding has no business to make this kind of statement. The hon. member is entirely out of order. His statements should not have been made; they are improper and I suggest to Your Honour that the hon. member should be cautioned.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think perhaps hon. members on both sides have made their point. I now call on the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom).

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the conscience of the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) is bothering him since he interjected in this debate. It struck me, when the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) was speaking earlier in this debate, that he started off by saying the committee must be established quickly and must begin its study immediately; that for that reason Senators should not be members of the committee; they can set up their own group and go into the