

*Interim Supply*

similar position, to carefully consider this problem, to weigh it in all its ramifications, and then to set out on a deliberate course to reverse the present trend, guaranteeing to the Canadian people that in the days to come they will not be victimized as they now are victimized.

Reference has been made to the fact that the cost of living will continue to increase. This accentuates the need for something definite and concrete to be done in order to meet the situation. It has been pointed out in the debate that persons in certain categories are seriously affected by the continuing trend in the cost of living. I suggest that those on fixed incomes are in serious difficulty. They are facing insurmountable obstacles in their endeavours to make their small incomes provide the necessities of life. Yet it seems as if those in authority are little concerned about this matter, and that they use various excuses to justify their inaction. There has been correspondence with various departments and various ministers about individuals who are finding it absolutely impossible, because of the cost of living, to meet their obligations. Such persons are on old age pensions, veterans pensions, civil service pensions, and other types of fixed income. Concerted attention does not seem to have been given to the needs of such people. The present government stands condemned because it has failed to give adequate consideration to this problem.

In addition to individuals in the categories I have referred to, who are affected by high prices, I submit that consumers in general are becoming perturbed about the trend in the cost of living index. We must recognize that the taxpayers of this country have to pay the shot for government expenditures. They have to assist in meeting the costs of services given to the people; they have to make contributions so that those unable to provide for themselves are provided for. Yet the taxpayer's income is reduced by the increased cost of living, as well as by government policy in this regard.

The time will come when the taxpayers will not be able to meet what is needed of them, when they will not be able to provide for themselves, let alone for the services of others. Not only are the pensioners of this country facing problems, but so also are the taxpayers and the consumers. I am therefore in sympathy with the hon. member for Prince

Edward-Lennox and with other hon. members who have raised this question. I sympathize with all those caught in the squeeze of rising prices. The time has come when something must be done about that.

● (1:50 p.m.)

The suggestion has been made that there should be a department of consumer affairs. One hon. member pointed out this morning that there is a complete absence of co-ordination of endeavour to meet this problem of the increasing cost of living. Various departments may have some concern about it, the minister may be doing a little, but there is no co-ordination of these efforts.

An illustration was placed before us recently of what can be done in such a situation. Time and time again it has been pointed out that the various aspects of education with which the federal government is concerned are spread out among a number of departments. Now we find there is a group of individuals upon whom has been placed responsibility for co-ordinating activities and responsibilities in the field of education. We welcome this step. If this can be done in one area of our national life, why should it not be done in others?

I do not know whether I would go to the length of supporting the establishment of a full department of consumer affairs but I do believe there should be some agency of government charged with responsibility for paying attention to the many and varied problems facing the consumer today, specifically those presented by the cost of living.

For all these reasons I join in raising a protest against the present situation. I join in asking the government to take positive action to ensure that something is done to prevent this cost of living spiral from continuing, and further depreciating the purchasing power of the Canadian dollar. I do so in order that our people may be able to provide for their own needs and make their contribution to the national economy.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mongrain:** Mr. Chairman, I will be very brief, because I understand that the house is anxious to pass those estimates. However, I would like to make a few remarks which might seem a little disconnected.

First of all I wish to support what the hon. member for Beauce (Mr. Racine) said about winter works. That legislation certainly needs to be amended, at least as far as the province