

could list another 12 to 15 items but I shall not take the time of the House to do that.

An hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: I know that Liberals do not like facts. Nothing disturbs a Liberal more than a fact. I do not want to upset that Liberal in the back row, so I will not give any more facts. The point is that the five items I have just listed were selected from a list that is much longer, all of which had price increases in the same percentage range, anywhere from 10 per cent to 30 per cent over the period of one week. What I and my party say is that we need a Prices Review Board with authority to investigate price increases of this kind and to order immediate rollbacks. Certainly, for the items I have listed there can be no justification for that kind of price increase.

Second, in the area of food the NDP had a central message in the recent Ontario election campaign as well as in Premier Barrett's campaign in British Columbia. It is that we stop prime agricultural land in Canada from going out of agricultural production and being used for other purposes. If you take prime agricultural land out of production, the inevitable consequence will be increased food costs. Third, we advocate an extension of the marketing board principle to other aspects of agricultural production than those currently covered. There have been some short-run problems with marketing boards; no one will deny that. However, in the long run orderly marketing is the best principle for farmers; it guarantees them reasonable prices over a period of time. This benefits the consumer in urban Canada as well. Those are specific suggestions with regard to food costs, none of which in detail or in principle has been implemented by this government. It could have been done in the past. It should be done now.

Quite apart from these specific proposals regarding food, housing and energy which we believe would be effective, if implemented now, in bringing down the cost of living very significantly in the months ahead, the government should recognize that in a good part of the Canadian economy there is no competition. Not only in the Canadian economy but in the American economy and that of western Europe it has been recognized for some time that the history of capitalist economic development has led to many sectors of each nation's economy being dominated by a handful of firms which do not compete. No serious economist would question that judgment today. What has the government done? In typical Liberal fashion, it has taken what I think is a good NDP idea, one which has been advocated for years—which is that in key sectors of the economy where there is no competition, there should be a price freeze and that any subsequent price increase would have to be justified by the corporations concerned—and turned it on its head.

● (1230)

The proposal which this party put forward would recognize economic reality. But that kind of thing is precisely what the Liberals have failed to do. They have taken what is basically a good idea, if I may say so without immodesty, and turned it upside down. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) has selected the 1,500 corporations, but instead of requiring them to justify future price increases he has

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said to them; "You can continue to increase your prices and we shall place the onus of responsibility for investigating those increases on the public." In other words, the government proposes to set up elaborate and detailed, costly machinery for investigating price increases after those increases have taken place.

If the government had come forward with a selective freeze in non-competitive areas and required the corporations to justify any increases, it would have been a lot more simple and a lot more effective in dealing with inflation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: As a final item in our approach to inflation, we would have been much more ruthless in that we would have acted with much more toughness in reviewing the work of government departments and cutting out specific programs. When the white paper was brought down there was an indication that the government was expecting all departments to cut back. We reject such an approach. As a party, we say there are some programs which should not be cut. On the other hand, there are some programs which are no good and should be totally eliminated. I shall not repeat the speech I made in the House just over a week ago in which I outlined, on behalf of this party, specific programs which we felt should be cut out entirely. It is time the government took a determined approach to some of its programs and cut out those which ought to be dispensed with. On the other hand, the nature of a number of programs is such that spending on them should be increased rather than decreased.

So much for our program. Very briefly, we reject the government's proposals, first because they do not deal directly and positively with reducing the cost of living in the areas of energy, housing and food, second because of the over-all approach to inflation is unfair and unworkable. The wage and salary control mechanism advocated by the government will no doubt be effective in holding down wage and salary increases to the guidelines levels. It will not be effective, and the government knows it, in ensuring that the 65 per cent of Canadians who are not in the trade union movement will get even the raises to which they are entitled in the government's view. The poor worker, the non-unionized worker has absolutely no hope of getting even the minimum the government says he is entitled to.

Then, again, in terms of professional incomes the government's proposal is a hoax. If the minister wants to control professional incomes, the only way to do it is to apply a 100 per cent surtax, as he must know from experience. That is the only way in which he could build equity into the system, yet it is precisely this step the government has refused to take. On the prices side, I will simply repeat the point which I and members of my party have made in the past. The indirect method of control advocated by the government will not work; it is too complex, and chartered accountants acquired by the corporations can do a lot of shifty work even in a legal context to make it difficult to isolate profits. As if this did not provide a sufficiently large avenue of escape for corporations, the government took pains to list in the white paper a number of loopholes the use of which would exempt corporations from the guidelines entirely. For example, any corporation which