

and incomes authority which we are proposing for this country, and which we in this group have proposed for the past three, four or five years when most ears were deaf to us. Those ears are now beginning to open and turn a little bit in our direction, as the logic of circumstances is making it necessary and desirable for them to listen.

• (1550)

We in Canada have to make our own start as well; we cannot be a carbon copy of any of these countries. We have not found the answers yet, but we have to make our own patterns and feel our way. We have our own problems, such as constitutional difficulties and our export trade difficulties as well as our relations with the provinces. In brief, to put it in a way with which we are so familiar, "Le Canada n'est pas un pays comme les autres."

We are not a country like those others and cannot pretend that we are. All I am saying this afternoon is that although we do not know the answers, we know that we must grapple with this problem of prices. We must begin with food prices and we must begin now. The longer we put it off the tougher it will be and the more human suffering there will be. This is a problem which affects us all, though it does not affect us all equally. That is the danger, the mischief of the talk of averages because people are not averages, they are flesh and blood. It is obvious that the woman with a brood of children and a tiny income is not in the same position as members of this House or people with a \$40,000 or \$60,000 income for whom the rising cost of food is at best a slight irritation. For people on pensions and fixed incomes, any rise can be catastrophic because it is an invitation to the gougers to move in on any increase in the pension or allowance.

I should like to return again to the experience of Sweden, which was the first country to set up this system and it is the most advanced. The other two countries that I mentioned are gaining experience with controls, but Sweden began in 1970 with specific, selective controls on specific products. About 50 per cent of food consumption in Sweden was affected—certain kinds of fish, vegetables, dairy products, flour and a few other things. This was later extended to a much wider range of foods. The result was that prices were held almost steady for the first year, 1970-71. In the fall of that year it was discovered that farm income needed to be strengthened. This sort of thing is done in Sweden; when a sector of the community needs strengthening, they do it. Food controls were relaxed to the extent that farmers were allowed to build up to the standard of the other sectors of the community. The result was an increase in the cost of living of 0.5 per cent. In the meantime, this was supplemented in various other ways where the need was demonstrated.

It was then discovered that a round of collective bargaining with trade unions had still to take place. Collective bargaining in Sweden operates within the framework of the increase in the gross national product in the previous year. The trade union membership decided that wage increases for 1971 were to go to the low wage earners. This resulted in an increase of 2.5 per cent in the cost of living. Between the increase to farmers and the increase to wage earners, there was approximately a 3 per cent increase in the cost of living.

Food Prices Committee

In Sweden the system has been set up to monitor the cost of living, and wages and food prices are dealt with as I have indicated. We had news at the beginning of this year that compulsory controls were being abandoned in the United States, except in the areas of food prices, health prices and construction costs. In that country, the Cost of Living Council monitors price increases to see that they are held in line.

There is no easy answer, Mr. Speaker. I do not recommend that we should follow the United States model of compulsory wage controls while leaving other sectors free. I know that we will not do that in this country. Through the Prices and Incomes Commission, we have already learned that it cannot be done much as some people would like to do it. But we must make our own pattern, suitable to our country. As a result of what the United States did, their monthly food index during 1972 varied between 3.2 per cent and 5.4 per cent above that of 1971; in Canada during the first nine months of 1972 the monthly food index was 7.2 per cent higher than in the same period in 1971. In other words, unsatisfactory as the American model was, at least it had some effect in keeping the cost of living below our rate.

Mr. Speaker, I should now like to turn to the motion before us concerning the composition of the committee. We cheerfully support the amendment to eliminate members from the Senate.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): We have given notice that this is what we want. Later, we will give our reasons and I trust they will be better than those given by the speaker ahead of me. The terms of reference should be much more specific than those we have in the government's motion. I have a motion on the order paper which reads, in part:

That the committee be empowered to call witnesses from the various sectors involved, including the consumer;

That it be given authority to examine financial records and to investigate the profit on equity investment at each stage of the food industry;

Equity investment is all-important. The sales dollar is what the food industry wants as a measure of profit, but there is no mention of the real problem.

That it be empowered to examine the corporate structure underlying the food industry, and inquire into agrobusiness, transportation, processing and packaging, distribution, advertising and promotion, retailing and any other aspects relevant to food prices;

That is the wording of the terms of reference, in part as we would like to see it. We want to see this investigation become a probe with a purpose, Mr. Speaker. We want to see a monitoring authority come out of it.

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): You do not have a monopoly.

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): I move, seconded by the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom):

That the amendment be amended by changing the period at the end thereof to a comma, and by adding immediately thereafter the following words:

"and that the motion be further amended by adding the following paragraph at the end thereof: