

made by the hon. member for Ontario and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. As the minister responsible for Bill No. C-190 I want to make my position perfectly clear. When the bill was granted second reading through the courtesy of the house I undertook to review all reasonable amendments that might be suggested by members of the opposition. Some amendments were presented to me on an informal basis by members of the official opposition. Those amendments have been reviewed by officials of the Department of National Health and Welfare, the food and drug directorate, my department, the Department of Justice and the Department of Industry. Then in an informal way, and through the hon. member for Halton who was chairman of the House of Commons committee that gave birth to some of the recommendations made in the bill, we negotiated with the hon. member for Simcoe East and the hon. member for Saskatoon.

I said in introducing the bill that I was satisfied that the bill protected the people of Canada, that the bill gave an assurance to the people of Canada that only safe, efficacious, high quality drugs would be imported or distributed. The fact that the Department of National Health and Welfare was party to the drafting of the bill was further assurance to me.

In light of the suggestions that were made by the official opposition we reviewed the bill. We have come forth with what we think are additional clarifications that in our opinion re-ensure the safety measures of the bill. I am prepared, of course, to stand by the bill in terms of its economic significance and in terms of the safety of the Canadian people, and I am prepared to have it debated at any time.

Mr. Alkenbrack: Mr. Chairman, I am glad that despite the political exigencies of the moment the house can deal with this vital question by way of debate at this time. I want to congratulate the minister, even though he is playing one of the key roles in the coming drama on April 6, for being in his seat today and attending to his duties as a minister and member of this house should. I would also like to congratulate all members who have taken part in this debate and to note that many constructive opinions have been placed before the committee, as well as before the government on whose shoulders rests the responsibility for the persistent rise in the cost of living the heavy load of which is now being borne by the people of Canada.

Supply—Consumer and Corporate Affairs

As reported at pages 5609 to 5611 of *Hansard* for May 27, 1966, during the first session of this parliament, Mr. Chairman, I pointed out to the government the economic plight of the vast majority of the citizens of Canada whose lives and livelihoods were and are being so adversely affected by the spiralling cost of living. I was followed by other hon. members from all parties who voiced the same warnings to the government. They too pointed out the harm that was being done to the farmers, the labourers, the professional people in the medium and lower income brackets, to the old age pensioners, the veterans and war pensioners—yes, Mr. Chairman, to the consumers of this country in general.

At that time I stated that present-day government policy and the consequent high cost of consumer goods are storming the last bastion of individual hope and the right of the individual to a decent standard of living. I also stated that it is practically impossible for the average head of a family to make his modest salary support the family from one payday to the next. My colleagues who participated in that debate two years ago—and I say colleagues because they were members from all parties—were equally concerned to point out to the government that prices had skyrocketed all along the line, in food, rent, clothing, fuel, transportation, medical services, insurance, taxes and capital cost of housing both new and used. In this rapid and cruel escalation of costs this government has been a steady partner. Its policies over the past four years glaringly illustrate this fact.

I do not wish today to enumerate once more all those facets of life and living that the policies of this government have so adversely affected. All I wish to do today, is to indicate some of the adverse conditions existing today from the point of view of the consumers of Canada, conditions which are now worse than they were two years ago. In this connection I should like to refer to some statistics I have just received from our reliable Dominion Bureau of Statistics. These figures have been produced by machine. The official who talked to my secretary on the telephone stated that he had asked the computer for the latest figures on the cost of living index.

In May, 1966, when we had that impromptu but effective debate to which I have referred, the consumer price index stood at 143.4. In February, 1968 the consumer price index stood at 152.7, an increase of 6.5 per cent. As