

Food Prices Committee

explore every effect and every cause of the problem facing people who are paying too much for the necessities of life. I believe this can be done without damage to the very desirable growth of our food and livestock industries.

Another aspect of this problem that interests me is consumer education. I do not believe that enough money or effort is expended in this area of teaching people how to get the most for their shopping dollar. I know that many advertising campaigns today are billed as consumer education programs, but they are designed to push products rather than to educate the buying public. What I have in mind is a government-sponsored program. It could be applied at any level of government considered to be the most effective for the purpose. It would be designed expressly to inform the financially disadvantaged consumer how he or she could get the most out of the shopping dollar.

I have not worked out the mechanics of how such a program should or would work, but I feel that such an avenue is worth exploring. I feel, also, that we have a responsibility to consider the desirability of upgrading consumer knowledge. We spend tens of thousands of dollars every year to get people to buy this product or that product. Why not spend some of the money teaching people how to buy?

Mr. Speaker, I have not tried in my remarks to show with figures how serious is the plight of the consumer nor how serious it might become. My purpose has been only to point out that inflation is not something which occurred a few weeks or a few months ago. It has been with us for a very long time. It has been with us for too long, and I would like to see an early start on positive action to determine the causes of and to seek the earliest possible solutions to the problem.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope once more that every effort be made to ensure the committee will get into action and become effective in the shortest possible time. I am heartened by the note of urgency I have detected in the speeches made so far in this debate. I have reason to believe that before long the real winners in this exercise will be those who are now the losers. I refer, of course, to the financially disadvantaged Canadian consumers.

Mr. Joseph-Philippe Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the only reason that I rise to speak on this matter is that I believe in all sincerity that too many speeches have been made so far on the matter of rising food prices, matters which should really be discussed in the committee which we are about to establish. What we should really be debating at this time is the formation of the committee. The discussion here will not solve the problem nor will it benefit the consumer, and while we are using the time of the House as we have done in the speeches made in the last few days, the price of food is going up. Certainly this is not to the benefit of the Canadian people.

The sooner everyone in the House allows this matter to go to the committee to give an opportunity to the members of the committee to perform the fact finding task which they will be called upon to perform, the better will

[Mr. Mitges.]

we be able to say in all sincerity that the Canadian people will be given a chance to benefit from that fact finding of such a committee.

In the meantime, I would suggest a vote as we had this afternoon is merely a delaying tactic. In fact one might think, on hearing the speeches which have been made in the last few days, that most members are again taking part in the debate on the throne speech and they are making speeches just for the sake of speaking. I believe it is the responsibility of the committee to do the job of fact finding, and not the responsibility of those who are making speeches here. The sooner this motion is passed, the sooner we will be able to say in all truthfulness and sincerity that we are forming a committee to do the job. We should stop speechmaking in the House and hand over the responsibility to the committee which this afternoon we voted to establish.

[Translation]

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say a few words on the motion presently being considered. It is certainly always important to establish committees to do studies, but I will say that several committees have been formed since I have been sitting in this House to do various studies.

If my memory is good, Mr. Speaker, I believe that a committee was formed to study both the increase in prices and the means of helping the consumers. This, I believe, cost Canadians about 32 or 33 million dollars and the prices have kept on increasing. Therefore, what has been done to solve the problem? What will the committee and its 25 members be able to accomplish? We are all in favour of studies but what solutions will they bring about to solve the problem?

Mr. Speaker, this is an economic issue and as long as we do not get to the root of the problem we will never succeed in properly stabilizing incomes, expenses and profits.

Mr. Speaker, farmers for instance have many expenses but their income is not sufficient. The price of food depends mostly on agriculture but what was done by the government or the appointed commissions to remedy this situation? The incomes of farmers and big corporations have kept on decreasing.

They say that the retailers are not making any money either. According to the NDP members, those retailers make profits, but others say they do not especially when it comes to selling of food. Then nobody makes any profits. Farmers do not make any money and the merchants who have to stock those goods and to pack them, once they have paid for everything, do not make any profit either and the cost of living keeps on increasing.

Why is the cost of living going up? Because when the farmer needs more buildings he has to pay 11 to 12 per cent sales tax on building materials and 11 to 12 per cent tax on the farming equipment he needs. This, Mr. Speaker, is a factor which increases the cost of living for the farmer as well as his costs. What should we do to restore balance to the economy?

The committee should be responsible for investigating the role of the price and income policy in the fight against inflation, including food prices. This is why the committee should be appointed. However, a similar committee and