

Cost of Living

discover that it is excess money in the hands of consumers, while there is a shortage of products to meet consumer demand. Now that is not the case at the present time. There is production in every shape or form, which really corresponds to the wishes of the people. Perhaps we could do more.

But what I find exasperating in all that, Mr. Speaker—and I should like here to be the spokesman for all those agricultural primary product producers—is that they always let people and consumers believe that it is the producers who are really responsible for the increase in food prices while that is absolutely untrue.

A casual glance at statistics will confirm that about 20 years ago, farm producers earned only 28¢ out of each dollar spent for food by consumers. And in 1973, to look at more recent times, we find that only 10 per cent of each dollar spent for food by consumers goes to farm producers. Which means the Canadian consumer spends less for food than any other consumer in any other country. It also means that if prices increase, it is on account of the voraciousness of some people somewhere and that is what we must find out.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, during the month of August, at a press conference—and I wish to repeat it tonight in this House—I had asked that the Food Prices Review Board do its duty, carry out its work and that if it did not have the power to exercise an effective control and show Canadians the real cause of the price increase in food products, the president should resign. I had also asked that the hon. members be recalled immediately to resume this session in order to deal with such a problem and bring in a solution.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, official statistics were published in newspapers. Following thorough research it was proven that the real culprits for the price increases in food as well as in many other fields are the combines, the large limited companies which are unknown to consumers but which fatten themselves up at the expense of the public by demanding inflated prices, thus making profits possible for themselves.

I have on hand a table published by an economist, Mr. François Dagenais who is working for the Quebec Agricultural Producers' Union; I do not mind giving his name because he is a responsible man who goes to the bottom of things. In that table, Mr. Speaker, we note that in 1972 and 1973, Dominion Stores Limited have increased their sales by 24.1 per cent, their income by 188.2 per cent. Let us ask our agricultural producers, our milk and egg producers, our poultrymen, etc. whether they have succeeded in increasing their income by 188.2 per cent!

Steinberg Foods Ltd. has reported a sale increase of 11.2 per cent and a profit increase of 58.2 per cent. As for the top profits, Harvey's Food Ltd. has reached it. Indeed, that company has increased its sales by 30.6 per cent and its profits by 646.5 per cent.

Table No. 2 shows the increase in sales, profits and taxes in the processing industries and indicates that Dominion Dairies Company Ltd. has upped its sales by 10.6 per cent and its profits by 3.7 per cent only.

Mr. Speaker, it is certainly in the field of dairy products that processors and distributors are least hungry. Figures

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

prove it. And I know a little about this area for having spent a good part of my life in it.

Further, in the table, it is reported that Canadian Canners Ltd. has boosted its volume of processed products by 9.3 per cent and its profits by 56.1 per cent.

Having said this, Mr. Speaker, I should like to get this straight: I stand among those who believe in private enterprise, because I consider that it is in that area that we can more effectively—

Mr. Benjamin: You cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member to let me finish my remarks and he shall see what I am driving at.

It is because this situation is best suited to allow for maximum output. However, I cannot accept that these corporations, on the pretence that the system works well should take advantage of the population and use the resources at their disposal to unduly increase their prices and their profits.

That is why I am against these trusts carrying on with their business without any control imposed on the prices of food.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allocated to him has now expired.

[*English*]

Mr. A. D. Alkenbrack (Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to make my contribution to the debate this evening because I, as well as many members of this House in all parties, deplore the situation prevalent in our country today in that we are suffering from the worst case of that virulent disease, inflation, in all the history of Canada. This House has seen some strange anomalies, as shown in the speeches just made by the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman) and the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid). As a result, it is only fitting to quote a well known columnist who recently wrote the following:

The more trouble the government gets in, the more they and the NDP castigate the official opposition.

Mr. Benjamin: That's Charles Lynch.

Mr. Alkenbrack: The government makes the excuse that because inflation is worldwide at this time, they can do nothing about it. This is a fallacy. Everyone knows that in an epidemic of a disease, as is the case with the economic epidemic of inflation, one can protect oneself against its onslaught by adopting habits and policies that work against this enemy of society.

This Liberal government and other Liberal governments for the past seven years have been steady partners and contributors to the grave economic condition in which we now find ourselves. The heavy and unreasonable taxation load placed upon the people by the former minister of finance, Mr. Benson, and now the same policy being applied by the present Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner), has aided and abetted this pernicious case of acute inflation now rampant in our economy. Surely the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and his cabinet have lived long