

Increased Cost of Living

of hon. gentlemen opposite who have forgotten some of the problems affecting Canadians in their daily lives.

The hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas) referred to the actions of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Greene) and his tour through shopping centres. We are waiting for the minister's almanac and shopping guide. But nobody in this house need tell the women of this country that food prices have risen drastically. It will not be good enough to have a committee of the house bring in a report blaming all these increased costs on the packaging and processing of commodities with the hope that this country's consumers will accept that explanation as a solution to their problems.

I was interested in the amendment of the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam which reads in part as follows:

—this House regrets the failure of the government to introduce policies designed to produce an equitable distribution of rising productivity and national income among all groups in Canada, particularly in view of the rising cost of living.

The rising cost of living has concerned the opposition over the years, particularly during the last couple of years. With respect to the wording of the hon. member's motion the opposition also contends that this government by its actions has tended to create false opportunities for prosperity in certain parts of the country to the detriment of other parts, the areas detrimentally affected being the maritimes and the province of Quebec. In the agricultural sector of our economy the maritimes and Quebec have suffered as a result of actions taken or not taken by the government. I need not bring to your attention, sir, that the rising cost of living, the highest interest rates in Canadian history, and the lack of action to provide an over-all program for prosperity for Canadians in every part of Canada have worked a hardship on people with fixed incomes, on old age pensioners, on those with farm incomes and on certain other categories of people in various parts of the country, and I think particularly of the Gaspé peninsula and maritime provinces.

Without going into details, I want to deal tonight with the situation affecting certain producers in western Canada. Before doing so I wish to draw attention to a matter affecting the welfare of all Canadians and having to do with the government's defence expenditures. You will recall, sir, that toward the end of 1963 the Minister of National Defence made certain proposals before the house and he earned this headline in *The Western Producer*

of December 12, 1963: "Report From Ottawa. Defence Spending Slashed". The article went on to say:

Here are some of the major cut-backs announced last week: Cancellation of the Canadian-built Bobcat armored troop carrier, in which some \$8,000,000 has already been invested.

• (8:10 p.m.)

There are a number of other items regarding cutbacks in men and materials for the armed services. I should like to ask the house to consider for a moment the decision taken with regard to the Bobcat at that time. I should like the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer) to tell us how effective the weapon purchased in its stead has been in so far as the Canadian defence program is concerned. I wish to read from an article in *The Western Producer* of December 12, 1963. If I may I will read just a few lines:

Possibly the biggest blow to Canada's pride in last week's announcement was the cancellation of the Bobcat program. It's the final chapter in a long, sad story.

Development work on the armored troop carrier was started back in 1954. And at the time, no other nation had anything like it on the drawing boards.

Yet we went ahead and purchased a vehicle from the United States.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have to interrupt the hon. member for a moment, if he will allow me. I must remind him that we now are considering a specific grievance in respect of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam which deals with the distribution of rising productivity and national income. I do not see the relationship between this and the purchase of the Bobcat to which the hon. member has referred. Perhaps there is a link. If so, he should indicate it to the Chair and to his colleagues in the house.

Mr. Nasserden: Mr. Speaker, anything which takes 27 per cent of Canadian tax dollars affects the cost of living in this country. I do not think anyone has to make an apology for drawing attention to the ineffectiveness of the government's policy in respect of defence and purchases in that regard. I have no desire, however, to labour that point at this time, because there are other fish to fry.

I have here some indication of what has happened during the year 1966. Consider this headline in *The Western Producer* of March 3, 1966: "Wheat payment drops to a disappointing level." Everyone in western Canada knows something about that situation. I find that the article points out that the Minister of