

Supply—Trade and Commerce

new consumer price index was first announced. So that the people may have an opportunity of measuring the extent of the rise in the cost of living I asked the minister whether the government would be prepared to continue publication of the cost of living index until at least the next general election. The minister rejected that very firmly. I was not asking him when the general election was to be called. Far from my thoughts be any such question, Mr. Chairman; but I did think that it was only due to the people that they should have an opportunity of measuring the extent to which the prices have risen and the value of the Canadian dollar has fallen. I think there is very great danger that that may be lost from sight if we accept 1949 as the standard year and simply calculate trends from that year and in relation to that year.

The minister does not want to regard the years 1935-39 as standard or typical, but I would not want to see the high costs that we have been living under, and which were in effect in 1949, regarded as typical. If the minister has some better suggestion, well and good. But let us not regard these four years 1935 to 1939 as typical. In measuring what is a reasonable time I ask the minister to continue to publish the old index along with the new, and to continue it for at least a year.

Mr. Howe: The bureau of statistics and my hon. friend were exactly opposite. The bureau of statistics pays no attention to elections, and my hon. friend thinks of nothing else.

Mr. Fleming: No.

Mr. Howe: Therefore I am afraid it will be difficult to reconcile the two points of view, but I will explain to the bureau my hon. friend's views, and they can take such note of them as they think warranted.

Mr. Coldwell: Can the minister tell me what has happened to that very useful and valuable publication the Canada Year Book? Has it been published this year, or what has happened to it?

Mr. Howe: It will be published.

Mr. Coldwell: It will be published this year?

Mr. Howe: Yes, in January, 1953.

Mr. Fair: As a farmer I do not like either the period 1930-35 or 1935-40. I never had as tough a time getting enough to eat, and paying my bills or of keeping the sheriff away as I did during that ten-year period from 1930 to 1939, which has been used for cost of living index purposes. I think of the

[Mr. Fleming.]

terrible damage that has been done to the farming industry, because while we were supposed to be getting into the period of Liberal prosperity during those years we were still down in the depths of a depression as far as farm prices were concerned. Prices that existed during those years have been used here on many occasions to show the prosperity of agriculture. They were entirely misleading figures, and as far as I am concerned, and agriculture as a whole, the sooner we get rid of the prices and the price structure of agriculture during the 1930 to 1940 period the better off we will all be.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I should like to make reference for a moment or two to what the hon. member for Eglinton said. I certainly never felt that the period for 1935-39 had any magical significance. I also agree with the hon. member for Eglinton that this other period should not be fastened on us either as a kind of normal yardstick because, if it is, what it really means is that a lot of people who have never been able to readjust themselves economically to the tremendous rises in prices are going to have that period accepted as more or less normal, and to that extent psychologically there will be a great difficulty in the way of their ever getting a readjustment.

What I want to speak about is the size of this item. Here we have an item of more than \$4 million. At a time when we are seeking economies we have an increase of \$259,000. No one has more cause to speak well of the dominion bureau of statistics than I have, because I have had a great deal of help and a great deal of courtesy from them. I do feel it is one of the places where it is extremely difficult to prevent expenditures from pyramiding; and unless there is a definite system effectively carried out it seems to me it is bound to go on. Because, after all, the people who are running this are enthusiasts—if they were not they would not be good at their job—and consequently there will constantly be those who will suggest this or that pet project—"pet", that is, to the suggester—and they will go on and do that work.

I wish to assert, first of all that, obviously, the minister, with all the things he has to do, cannot be reviewing these many hundreds of employees, and trying to analyse what is going on. Who does it? The minister says there is a committee. I would like to know who compose the committee.

While I am on my feet I would ask the minister whether he has thought of the possibility of having the fresh views of some outside agency which would come in, investigate what has happened, and ask the very useful question: Why? I understand when Winston