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[English]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

FOOD PRICES

MOTION TO APPOINT SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE

The House resumed, from Thursday, January 18, consideration of the motion of Mr. Gray:

That a special committee of this House be appointed to inquire into and make recommendations upon the trends in food prices in Canada and factors domestic and foreign which account for these trends;

That 20 members of the House of Commons to be designated by the House at a later date be the members of the Special Committee and that Standing Order 65(5) of the House of Commons be suspended in relation thereto;

That the said committee have power to send for persons, papers and records and examine witnesses; to sit during periods when the House stands adjourned; to report from time to time and to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be deemed advisable; to delegate to sub-committees all or any of their powers except the power to report direct to the House; to engage the services of counsel, accountants and such other clerical and technical personnel as may be deemed necessary.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, in view of the fact that last night the House decided this committee might well be composed only of members of the House of Commons, perhaps we could facilitate the commencement of the proceedings of the committee and, through the usual channels before too long a time has elapsed, add by mutual arrangement an amendment to the motion setting out who will be the members on the committee. I raise this point now in the hope that members of all parties, through the usual channels, might have this kind of discussion, instead of having to come back with a further motion respecting those members who will be asked to sit on the committee.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether I might say a word on the same point of order. We would be quite glad to participate in such discussions so that the names of the members can be added to the motion, avoiding the necessity for another motion being made later. I wonder whether those discussions could also include the number of members on the committee. I do not wish to upstage the suggestion of the Progressive Conservatives for a committee of 19, but I should like to suggest that the number be 28 or 30, now that there are no Senators on the committee. This would give better representation to all parties in the House. However, I am merely suggesting that this matter be included in the discussions suggested by the Progressive Conservative House leader.

Mr. Speaker: As I understand the suggestions that have been made by the hon. member for Peace River and the

Food Prices Committee

hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, there will be discussions to consider certain aspects of the motion before the House. I assume that these discussions will take place, but for the time being we will proceed with consideration of the motion before us.

• (1200)

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House today is very similar to a motion placed on the order paper by the government in 1966 calling for the setting up at that time of a joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons. I listened with great interest to the speech by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Gray) in leading off the debate, but I am sorry to say that I found nothing new in what he had to say. His remarks were very similar to the speech made by the government representative in 1966 when a similar motion was introduced.

I was impressed, however, with the very excellent speech by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence), and I might say that as a consequence of his intervention we now have before us a much more workable proposition, which hopefully will end up in the establishment of a much more workable committee. I listened as well with great interest, as I always try to do, to the speech by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis). She has established herself in this House as an articulate and dedicated spokesman on consumer affairs. Hon. members of the government would do well to pay more attention to the remarks of the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway.

As I have said, this is not the first time that we have had a proposition like this put before us. I have already referred to the joint Senate and House of Commons committee set up in 1966 on April 21. This committee was given terms of reference almost identical to those we have before us today. Indeed, the terms of reference were identical to those of the committee that the government proposed to set up before the amendment placed before the House by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham was accepted last night.

It is interesting to look at the workings of that 1966 committee. As I say, it was set up in April of 1966. Its terms of reference were changed from the original consumer credit study to enable the committee to look into food prices. It submitted what was termed a progress report, which was in fact its final report, on April 25, 1967. The committee met on 59 different occasions in the city of Ottawa between September 28, 1966 and February 1967. In addition, the committee was constituted into two sub-committees in order to facilitate its work. It went across the country holding public hearings in 12 of the principal cities of Canada and the major recommendation to come out of that committee, as is a matter of record, was the establishment of the department of consumer affairs.

We then had the Senate committee on poverty which also did excellent work. It was set up on November 26, 1968 and submitted its report in the fall of 1970. This was a study of poverty in Canada, but anybody who has read the report and followed the deliberations of that committee will know it had to concern itself with the general