

*Increased Cost of Living*

no program". I think the Conservatives believe that excitement will convince the voters of this country that they have something. But the voters know that at the end of 90 days, prices would go still higher.

**An hon. Member:** That is nonsense.

**Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway):** It may be nonsense, but you will have a chance to contribute in your own way. We in the New Democratic Party are firm in our determination to press for more than an investigation. The board as set out by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs does not have anything like the powers that we asked for and that the people want. Mr. Speaker, neither this party nor the people of this country are going to be fooled by what the board is at the present time. It is just an investigatory board, a toothless wonder.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway):** I am not going to be silenced on the matter, Mr. Speaker. Up to this point the proposed prices review board has been nothing more than the resurrection of John Young's prices and incomes commission, which did absolutely nothing for three years except to spend \$3 million of the taxpayers' money and produce reams and reams of paper. It was a waste of time, paper, money and expertise.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway):** That is exactly what is proposed now. Mr. Speaker, I want to put forward our proposals. We believe that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs should, without delay, bring in legislation to clothe either the board or himself—I do not think it matters very much which one it is—with the power to act on the findings of the board. Anything short of power to act is a waste of time and a deception.

Let me tell you, Mr. Minister, that you are lighting a slow fuse if you think you can get away with a board that is just another investigatory body. You cannot. The people of this country have been led to believe that this committee was a forerunner of action on the part of the government; they have been led to believe that the government is concerned about them. It is not only the people on low incomes who are suffering—although they are suffering most severely—but as costs creep higher and higher, people in the middle and higher income levels are suffering as well. Some of the analysts promise us a 45 per cent price increase in the future.

Mr. Minister, I say that by bringing in a board of this type in your name you would be, in my opinion, betraying the consumers of this country. The consumers trust you with their well-being, and they do not believe that you are going to fob them off with just another investigatory, time-wasting body. I would suggest that you keep your record clean and do not get—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I trust the hon. member will not mind my interrupting, but I must remind her that an effort should be made to address the Chair rather than the minister.

[Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway).]

**Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway):** I certainly shall, Mr. Speaker. I am referring to the minister, but it certainly causes me no hardship to put my remarks through the Chair. I shall remember that.

We want the minister or the board to be clothed with powers to prevent unjustifiable prices, to roll back prices which are unjustifiable and to protect the farmers where necessary by price supports or subsidies, or in whatever way is essential. I was rather amused this afternoon to hear one of the hon. gentlemen to my right, who like myself is from the city, suggest that all we need to do is plan for very quick production. I was thinking how the farmers would react to that idea. Presumably, within this 90-day freeze beef could be raised from conception to table. I know it is going to be more complicated than that.

We do not propose that the price of all kinds of meat be controlled, but that there be selective controls on certain foods which, taken together, would add up to a nutritionally sound diet. Don't tell me it cannot be done. I have here a copy of the *Daily Telegraph* of London, England, dated February 22 which points out that in Britain they are exercising very definite control on the price of a particular commodity. That is the Kellogg's firm, which has 60 per cent of the market. The government is telling Kellogg's that it will hold the line on those prices as long as it believes it should do so and prevent their going higher, because higher prices would be unjustifiable.

● (1750)

I want to pay tribute to the chairman of our food prices committee, but in my view he was stretching the point a bit when he referred to the quick response by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs in dealing with the prices review board. I do not think his response was quick. I agree with the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath). Surely, even during these last two or three weeks when he was looking for suitable members for the board, the minister could have found at least one suitable candidate. As well, he might have done something else—met with his opposite numbers in the provinces and discussed with them provisions that would be necessary to overcome any constitutional obstacles in this field, with a view to overcoming them. Even if they did not remove them, we might have discovered what they were.

Mr. Speaker, in this country there have been many areas over which jurisdiction has been divided between provincial governments and the federal government. Governments could not encroach upon each other's jurisdictions. However, when the public wanted action taken in a joint way, it was taken. When the people wanted income taxes to be collected exclusively by the federal government, the provinces were able to surrender the power of taxation to the federal government. These things can be done if the government wants to do them.

My great fear is that this government does not genuinely wish to set up a prices review board that can act. I have not seen evidence of such a desire and that is why I am afraid. I am telling this to the consumers of this country because they must make sure the government realizes how essential it is that the board be in a position to act. Also, I am telling the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs that it will be highly dangerous for him if he does