

are mainly recommendations dealing with consumer education—stand ignored.

Since that committee was set up, commencing with the reference in the Speech from the Throne at the opening of this 29th parliament, I believe the committee held 35 sittings, heard a vast number of witnesses from all segments of the industry, and was one of the hardest working committees I have ever been associated with in my experience in this House. All members of that committee from all parties took their duties seriously and worked very hard. Whilst we did not always agree, we always tried to arrive at a consensus, especially so far as our reports were concerned.

The only time we differed from that point of view and were not part of a consensus was in the presentation of the first report and the recommendation dealing with the Food Prices Review Board. We felt that that recommendation was not adequate. We felt then, and subsequent events have confirmed us in our view, that you cannot examine food prices in isolation. Let me tell my hon. friends that you cannot examine food prices and ignore the cost of labour. You cannot examine food prices and ignore the cost of shelter. You cannot examine food prices and ignore the cost of transportation. We know what happened in the area of transportation as a result of the so-called energy crisis and the increase in the price of diesel oil. So we differed with the committee in that one instance; but all of the other recommendations, and I think there were six in the first report, were unanimously approved by the committee.

So far as the second report was concerned, the second recommendation of the committee in that report—and this is unprecedented in my recollection—asked the government to get on with implementing the recommendations made in the first report. As I say, that has to be unprecedented. That should have been the last recommendation of our third and final report, namely that because of the seriousness of the situation we ask the government to get on with implementing all of the recommendations of the committee.

Since that time, Mr. Speaker, let us just see what has happened. Bread has increased by 22.5 per cent, meat by 21.7 per cent, beef by 25.2 per cent, poultry by 34.5 per cent, fish by 33.7 per cent, eggs by 26.2 per cent, and sugar by 71.6 per cent. That is what has happened since the government expressed its concern a year ago and announced that it was setting up a Special Committee on Trends in Food Prices.

The food prices committee is now gone: enter the Food Prices Review Board and the studies made by that board. Notwithstanding the limitations of the board, and notwithstanding all of its weaknesses and imperfections, the board has made some very worth-while recommendations. We saw, for example, the report dealing with egg prices. That report made some very serious charges, especially in light of the fact that the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency and the egg marketing boards under its jurisdiction operate under federal government licence. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Gray) has washed his hands of it and has passed the buck to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan), who in turn passed it to another agency, a farm products agency, and asked that

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agency to examine the charges made by the Food Prices Review Board. As I said in committee yesterday, that is like asking Henry Ford to examine automobile prices.

So far as the recommendation dealing with bread is concerned, last summer and in September the government brought in its subsidies on milk and bread. We were told at that time that there would be no further increases, that this would hold the line. We are now told that in addition to the three cents increase in the price of a loaf of bread just recently announced, milk is going to increase further in price. What happens to the government's subsidy program? Does it react with another ad hoc subsidy? Is the Minister of Agriculture going to get his feet wet today when he makes his statement and provides the House with another band-aid approach, another form of ad hoc subsidy, while the main problem goes ignored? I suspect that is precisely what he is going to do.

● (1420)

Let us now take a look at the Speech from the Throne in which the government announced that it would bring in a new food policy based upon three objectives: An adequate and dependable supply; reasonable prices for consumers and producers; and a continuous supply of export foodstuffs. All of those were recommended within a year by the food prices committee. What I want to know is when the government is going to be seized of the urgency of this situation. When is it going to be conscious of the hardship this imposes on the majority of the wage earners of this country who see their savings being eroded, daily, weekly and monthly by an annual rate of inflation which is now in excess of 10 per cent? The people of this country will not tolerate that kind of situation. This government, if it persists in ignoring the warning signals which are there, will do so at its peril.

I say to the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore, and his friends in the labour movement who are very much aware about what I am talking about, all one has to do is look at what is happening to average weekly earnings. The latest figures released by Statistics Canada indicate a progressively deteriorating situation. The average Canadian worker was earning a wage in the month of December that was approximately \$5 less than the month before and only 5.9 per cent higher than in December 1972. When that is compared to the cost of living increase over the same period of 9.1 per cent, it is indeed obvious that whatever the workingman had managed in salary increases has been more than eroded by inflation. Is there any wonder there is labour unrest in this country today? The blame for a great deal of that labour unrest has to fall on the shoulders of not only this government but its junior partner in coalition, the NDP.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cyr: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Does the House give unanimous consent to the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Cyr) to ask a question?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.