

member. That includes all of the opposition. I shall have something to say about that later.

In introducing the resolution the Prime Minister said, as reported at page 744 of *Hansard*:

I might begin by saying that I believe all hon. members of the house are agreed that the question of the recent rise in prices, particularly of the increase in the cost of living, is a matter of nation-wide concern.

The Prime Minister's statement is accurate, to say the least. Not only are members of the House of Commons concerned with the recent rise, not only is it nation-wide, Mr. Speaker, but it extends over the past year, as illustrated by the following figures which I intend to put on *Hansard*, since they have been obtained from the January copy of the *Labour Gazette*. These are the figures month by month adjusted to base 100 for August, 1939. The January increase was .8 points; February 1.1; March 1.7; April 2.4; May 1.8; June 1.0; July .7; August 2.8; September 2.8; October 1.4; November 2.5 and December 2.3. It does not look to me as if there has been any considerable recent rise. The increase has been pretty steady over the year. The total rise is 21.3 points in the year, and the average was almost 1.8 point per month.

Food increased from 145.5 on January 1, 1946, to 182.2 on January 1 of this year, or an increase of 36.7. As I said before, it is not just a recent rise that is concerning the people, but the rise that has taken place over this year. I am surprised, as I am sure the country is surprised, that the Prime Minister used that word "recent". I know that the house and the country would like to know why that word "recent" was inserted in the resolution. They appreciate the significance of it, because it will effectually prevent any inquiry into the effect of government policy on the cost of living. The Prime Minister went on to say, at page 744 of *Hansard*:

This afternoon I do not intend to go into the question of the causes of the rises in prices, or of possible remedies, but merely to bring forward a motion on one related matter which is part of the government's program in dealing with this large question.

In view of the nation-wide concern over the increases in the cost of living it is surprising to me that the Prime Minister did not go into the question of the causes. I think the country is disappointed that some statement of this kind was not made by the Prime Minister at this time. He has had long experience in these matters. In 1920 he had no hesitation in telling the country that he knew all about it, what the causes were and all that sort of thing, and what he would do about it when he was returned to power.

[Mr. Ross (St. Paul's).]

It seems to me that he is strangely silent now, and also strangely silent on other matters relating to government policy.

This resolution, the Prime Minister says, pertains to one of a series of measures which the government has adopted and other measures that the government will bring forward later. Mark that word. The government will bring forward measures later. But the people of the country do not want a committee; they want some kind of action on the part of the government.

What other measure has the government up its sleeve which it will bring forward later? It does not do the people any good to have these measures brought forward later. The Prime Minister says that for obvious reasons some parts of the program could not be disclosed, and then he refers to taxation proposals which he says cannot be disclosed before the budget is brought down.

What a change of attitude has taken place on the part of the government! How self-righteous they are all of a sudden. Go back to November 1947 and they did not hesitate to disclose and to bring into force by order in council some of the most drastic legislation that has ever been perpetrated on the people of Canada, when parliament was not sitting, by way of the prohibition of imports and also the imposition of the twenty-five per cent excise tax.

If the government have a policy about things they intend to bring forward later, why not bring it into force now? Why not bring in a budget now, so that whatever tax reductions may be given to the people may be had now and not two or three months from now? Why not give some relief at once by reducing the eight per cent sales tax and the twenty-five per cent excise tax?

I recall when the Prime Minister in the election campaign of 1935 went from coast to coast and fairly howled against the sales tax, telling the people at that time what an iniquitous thing it was and what he would do if elected. He would cut the tax—cut it out, I think it was. But what did he do? Right after being elected, after getting a majority and coming back, in the budget of 1936 the tax was not cut but was increased from six to eight per cent. I have no confidence in promises of that kind as to what the government will do by reason of something they have up their sleeve.

Promptness is what is wanted in this connection, and now is the time to take action. A reduction in these taxes would have a great effect on the cost of living, and the responsibility is the government's. I would like them now, more especially the Prime Minister, to