

## Supply—Trade and Commerce

defence items, as the minister has now said. I was referring particularly to agricultural products.

**Mr. Howe:** I think we exported more wheat and more flour. If we did not last year, we will in the current year export more wheat and more flour to Britain than we have ever exported in history.

**Mr. Charlton:** I wonder whether we could have those figures?

**The Chairman:** During the general discussion it appeared clear that the minister did not agree with the statement made by the hon. member for Brant-Wentworth and the hon. member for Brant-Wentworth did not agree with the reply given by the minister. I do not think they will agree any more readily this evening.

**Mr. Smith (Moose Mountain):** I think I will be in order on this. It was mentioned here this evening that inspectors—this might come under salaries; I understand that inspectors are given salaries if they work for the government—have gone around to retailers in this country and told them that they had to charge more for their products. Would that be a federal inspector? If so, can the minister tell us his salary?

**Mr. Howe:** They were not federal inspectors, of course. My hon. friend spoke about domestic affairs, and we are discussing export affairs. He would have to go back to the last war when we had price controls. Possibly the wartime prices and trade board have inspectors, but there are at present no federal inspectors, dealing with retail prices, and there have not been any for at least seven years.

I might point out that under the constitution of Canada prices are the responsibility of the provinces, except when certain emergency legislation is in force, which it is not at the present time. Property and civil rights are a function of the provinces. If anyone can control prices it is the provinces. There must be provincial legislation for that purpose. If the federal government attempted to do so, its legislation would be declared ultra vires.

**Mr. Smith (Moose Mountain):** I have a supplementary question. This is the point I want to get. Were there any government officials setting prices and telling the retailer that he should raise his price? I know there was a price set above which you could not go, but what I am getting at is this. Was there ever a time in the history of Canada, to the minister's knowledge, when a retailer was told he could not lower his price?

**Mr. Howe:** No.

**The Chairman:** Order. In order to keep this discussion conducted in an orderly manner I cannot permit questions to be asked on an item which has nothing to do with control prices.

**Mr. Coldwell:** With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, may I suggest that since a number of hon. members—I was not one of them—were away this afternoon attending committee meetings, and I rather think some of them would have liked to speak on the general item in a more general way, as some of us did, a little latitude might be given.

**The Chairman:** I would say to the hon. member that I sympathize as much as I can with those who were not here during the general discussion. He will also agree with me that I cannot be governed by my sympathies in the performance of my duties. Therefore the discussion, according to the rules, has to be strictly relevant to the item under discussion. It is always unpleasant for the chairman to intervene and ask hon. members to confine their remarks to the item under discussion. I have always found it very difficult to have this particular rule observed, paragraph 2 of standing order 58. That standing order contains the word "strictly". It says that the remarks must be strictly relevant to the item under discussion. I am afraid that, at times, if some of my colleagues were not kindly disposed toward me they would feel that I am at fault in permitting so many hon. members to disregard the rules. The hon. member for Yale may proceed.

**Mr. Jones:** I agree with your ruling, Mr. Chairman. Unfortunately, however, during that time in which you allowed a certain amount of latitude, statements were made which I do not think should remain unchallenged. One statement was made by the Minister of Trade and Commerce in connection with the varying of crops to avoid surpluses. In general what the minister said is true, but I must say that in my constituency we are tied to an apple, pear and small fruits crop in general, and that crop cannot be varied from year to year. We could not grow apples in one year and potatoes the next. We are tied to a crop that cannot vary. Therefore that principle does not apply.

**The Chairman:** Order. The hon. member is quite right when he says that a certain amount of latitude has been allowed. As a result of that there are bound to be complaints from some hon. members.

However, once the Chair has listened to the initiation of the discussion, and has satisfied himself that it has reached a stage of duplication, such as has now taken place, he must