

*Government Organization*

who has any kind of business experience must realize that overheads vary and therefore prices should fluctuate. We all know that if Weston Bakeries increases the price of a loaf of bread all the rest of the bakeries follow suit. This fact is true of many other companies. For instance, if the price of sugar is raised by one of the largest companies the rest of the companies increase the price of sugar.

Apparently there is no supervision on the part of the government in regard to consumer prices. Many people were surprised to find this year that their telephone bills continued to increase in spite of the fact that the dividends paid by the Bell Telephone Company were the highest in history. They were so high that a government board investigated the situation and recommended that there should be some limitation. Surely this type of curb should be applied to all unreasonable or unrealistic increases in the price of consumer goods.

The type of department we have in mind could consider many things and supervise in fields in which the government has not been involved before. There seems to be an attitude on the part of governmental officials that if they become involved in fields with which they have had nothing to do previously it will shock the sensitivity of provincialists. We in this party believe that the minister of a department of consumers affairs, particularly if the minister were a woman, could look into the problems which housewives face in respect of varying sizes of clothing. Let me outline the problems I have in mind.

There is a tremendous variation in the actual size of children's clothes and shoes manufactured by different companies. It is obvious that all ten year old children are not going to be able to wear the same size pants, nature being what it is, but it would be nice if a mother could order a certain size and always get the same size regardless of the manufacturer. A pair of size 10 pants today should be exactly the same size as another pair tomorrow or next week. A department such as we have in mind could develop a Canadian set of standards so that all sizes would be uniform and so that when a company labelled an article of clothing as being shrink-proof it would be just that and would remain the same size after it was washed.

Something similar should also be done with regard to canned and packaged goods. How many housewives get hosed every time they buy so-called bargains at the grocery store?

[Mr. Peters.]

For example, usually the housewife will buy a 13-ounce can of peas, but when they are put on sale at perhaps six for a dollar they are actually 5 or 6 ounce cans with the result that she is not getting a bargain at all. These goods should also be standardized as to size.

**Miss LaMarsh:** What about frozen goods? They all come in standard sizes.

● (5:50 p.m.)

**Mr. Peters:** I did not know that frozen goods came in uniform sizes, and perhaps what the hon. lady has said strengthens my argument. Frozen goods are sold by the pound and therefore they are the same in size. If this were true of all canned and packaged goods I am sure that the housewives of Canada could budget their money and make it go further than it does today. In my opinion, if this kind of advice were given to the housewives of Canada it would make their budgets go a lot farther than is the case at the moment. This is the kind of thing that consumers would expect from a consumers' bureau.

Perhaps the government is not interested in the housewives of this country. Perhaps they are not really interested in consumers at all. But I suggest they had better think about this question because the housewives are very vocal in this regard. They certainly are to me. Every time I walk into a grocery store at home I believe I talk to every housewife in the store about this subject, not because I want to do so, because I would like to sneak in sometimes and buy something and leave. But that is not possible. If I go into a grocery store I know I will hear from every housewife there about the increase in prices since the last time she shopped.

I believe the government will have to face this problem because sooner or later the housewives will decide that they are going to do something about it. Certainly organizations such as the Voice of Women, the consumer groups, the better business bureaux and others are now finding that the people are not just willing to talk at meetings but are interested in finding out what they can really do to solve these problems. They no longer are satisfied with talking about mundane things which have been brought before parliament in the past, and they will be putting before us matters of substance about which something should be done.

I would also like this consumers' bureau to have something to do with public utilities because I think this is a field that such bureau would want to take a close look at.