

Emergency Powers Act

it, the hon. member for Eglinton pointed out that prices had risen in some of those enterprises which were under control. The truth is that the increases in fuel and light, where the rates in many instances are controlled by public ownership and in others by public regulation, were among the lowest of all during the decontrol period. Rents rose only 21 per cent, less than half the increase shown in many other services. That was so because rents remained at least partially under control. The fact is that it is the free enterprise components of the price index in which prices have skyrocketed most. Those components of the price index which were controlled or partially controlled by public ownership or by public regulation of rates increased least of all during the decontrol period. When the government undertook this decontrol policy we were assured that free enterprise would moderate the price increases, that supply and demand would take care of them. Exactly the opposite has been true. In those fields where private enterprise operated uncontrolled we have had the highest telling us of the good things its control period.

The government is a little backward about telling us of the good things its control policy did during the war, I presume because they do not want to undertake controls at the present time. Here is a comparison between the four and a half years during which we were under price control, between December 1941 and April 1945, and the four and a half years we have been under the government's decontrol policy. I will show the difference in food and clothing. During the price control period food prices in the city of Toronto rose nine points. During the four and a half years we have been under government decontrol food prices have shot up 76.5 points. In the city of Winnipeg food prices increased 11 points during the four and a half years we were under control. They increased 85 points during the four and a half years under decontrol. That picture is true in practically every urban centre in Canada. In Vancouver food prices went up 12½ points during the control years and they have gone up 87 points under decontrol.

The situation in regard to clothing is just the same; prices have skyrocketed during the decontrol years. It is often said, particularly by the opponents of price control, that increases in prices are caused by increases in wages that the workers have been receiving. We are told again and again it is because of these demands by trade unions that prices have risen. We are assured that labour is one factor entering into the production of goods which has been responsible for

these prices. What is the truth? According to the dominion bureau of statistics in practically every case rising prices have kept abreast of increases in wages. The highest paid wage earners in Canada today, those in the pulp and paper industry, are just about four dollars per week ahead of where they were in 1946. They have made the largest gains of any industrial workers in this country. Most of the other groups who have made any gains at all have made gains of from one dollar to two dollars per week in real dollars.

Actually, as of July 1, 1950, according to the dominion bureau of statistics, there were 234,000 from among twenty-one industries whose real wages, in terms of purchasing power, showed a decrease in 1950 as compared with 1946. In other words, there were 234,000 people who lost more by rising prices than they gained by their increased wages. In another group of white-collar workers employed in retail, wholesale and finance offices, as of that date there were 271,000 who were worse off in 1950 than they were in 1946. For those 271,000 the rising cost of living had outstripped any increases they had secured in wages to the point where the dollars they received in 1950 would purchase less than the dollars they were receiving for their weekly pay in 1946. There were 214,000 people employed in the retail trade in Canada, white-collar workers, who showed an average gain of only 46 cents per week over their 1946 income. In other words, there were 214,000 people for whom the rising cost of living had absorbed everything they had received by way of wage increases except 46 cents a week. That is the situation so far as the wage earners in this country are concerned.

If you want the picture of what it means to families, what it means to those who are trying to make ends meet these days, you only need to read Jack Scott's column in the *Ottawa Citizen*. Here one gains the real picture of what this government's mild inflation means to the ordinary citizen. On February 9, 1951, Jack Scott wrote in his column as follows:

Consider the familiar undramatic facts. A letter from a Vancouver woman who has three children and a husband whose take-home income is \$166 monthly plus \$16 family allowance says: "We dress in rags and hand-me-downs. The boys both need winter coats, but they will have to wait. We get our shoes mended so many times I am ashamed to take them to the cobbler. My husband owns one three-year-old twenty-five dollar suit. He still is using his army shirts and socks. Entertainment, don't make me laugh. If we want to go to a show we have to figure on \$3.50 at least counting the baby sitter and carfare. We do most of our going out separately. The niggardly cheese-paring methods with regard to food are what hurts me

[Mr. Noseworthy.]