

The reason I say this is the motion that the house should be voting on is that this is the issue in the country, whether the government likes it or not—not the matter of setting up a committee. Every hon. member, irrespective of the side of the house on which he sits, if he is honest with himself will tell the house that from all sections of the public in his own constituency—farmers, church organizations, Canadian legion, non-political organizations—all of them have been submitting resolution after resolution to hon. members demanding the reimposition of price controls and the re-enactment of the subsidy arrangement to halt the trend in the inflationary spiral that is now on. That matter should have been voted on in this house, because that is the issue. But it was not done, and the government will have to take the responsibility for it.

In my opinion the setting up of a committee would be all right provided action were taken first to try to hold the line where it is at the present time; then the committee could investigate and ascertain the reason for the present inflation and the matter of profiteering, so called. But that was not done, and the responsibility for the delay in getting something done will have to rest with those who voted against our proposal to have action taken immediately.

In the matter of increase of price—and the increases have been drastic in the last four or five months—in my opinion it is not an accident. The Minister of Finance told the country, not in this house but through the press and over the air, that the present trend in prices was going according to plan and that they would strike a certain level and then level off. If the inflation we have today is planned inflation, then we should cease wasting time in the house discussing the matter. Personally I believe it is.

My conception of the present situation is that there is such a tight integration between the economies of Canada and the United States that price levels in this country are going to reach the levels prevailing south of the line. In my opinion that is the trend. But I would suggest to members of this house that they also take note of what is happening in the United States according to today's press. The stock market is getting shaky and prices are beginning to fall. That is the initial step towards unemployment and depression. It is not a good sign, and the time is not far distant when that trend will put the "not wanted" signs up on plant and factory gates.

What is the reason? The reason in my opinion is that the Marshall plan in the United States has not got under way as soon as it

[Mr. Gillis.]

should, with the result that purchasing power in Europe is nil, goods are beginning to pile up in the United States, the market is getting shaky, prices are beginning to fall, and the next thing in the United States will be depression and unemployment.

I urge the people in charge of the economy of this country, that is to say the government, to watch things in the United States, not to follow events blindly, because in my opinion the thing will tailspin over there unless Truman gets the support of his government and the reimposition of controls and subsidies towards which he has been working for some considerable time now.

I do not think a committee investigating this matter in Canada at this time is the proper kind of action. It is too serious. Something must be done about it quickly. What will they investigate in the matter of profiteering? In my opinion there is no such thing as profiteering in Canada. Under the present system anyone in Canada who has something to sell is legitimately entitled to charge what the traffic will bear, and in the present trend that is indicated clearly. Butter for example was selling at 70 cents a pound. The government undertook to put a ceiling on it, but it did not put a ceiling on it. It put a sky on it. It was jumped from 70 cents, and a ceiling of 73 cents was put on.

An hon. MEMBER: That is not true.

Mr. GILLIS: It is true. So when your committee sits and takes evidence, where will be the line of demarcation? How will you determine what profiteering is? When is a man a profiteer? Under the present scheme he is allowed to charge as much as he can get. There is no law in this country that will enable the courts to determine when a man is profiteering. There may be exorbitant prices, but there is no law that says a man cannot charge and get for what he is selling, for any commodity he is handling, whatever he can get under the present scheme of things.

Mr. CRUICKSHANK: Is the farmer making an exorbitant profit?

Mr. GILLIS: You have no fixed profits. That is one thing we have urged in this house time and again. We have been urging that in addition to fixing prices and regulating wages, profits also should be fixed. Profits are one of the big factors today in this country—one of the factors that have got us into the mess we are now in—because they are uncontrolled until such time as the government is prepared to lay down some definite regulations with regard to the margin of profit anyone is permitted to make, taking anything in excess of