

*Proposed Consumers Affairs Department*

the United States of America. It seems to me to be only prudent to have price information available in this period of inflationary trends. It is a precautionary method. It is a preventative measure and not a cure in itself. When this country is threatened with the spectre of inflation, surely any measure to assist in gauging its imminence and thus providing an opportunity for immediate remedial steps is worthy of consideration.

• (5:30 p.m.)

In summary, as I stated at the outset I agree with the motion in principle but at the present time I suggest that a section of an existing department could be utilized to perform the functions that the mover envisages for the new department and over which it might have jurisdiction. In this way the same results could be achieved without the considerable expense and work that the creation of a new department would entail. If after the creation of such a bureau its work warranted a separate department, then the next logical step would be its creation.

The government shares the concern of the entire country and the members of this house in regard to the plight of the consumer who in effect is buyer and producer alike. Augmenting the considerable work done by the joint committee on consumer credit, the establishment of a consumer bureau within an existing department and the creation of a price commission as a sentinel for the Canadian people on constant vigil, guarding against inordinate and dangerous price rises in any segment of our economy, would, I feel, be a wise move in the government's continual concern for the welfare of our people.

**Mr. E. Nasserden (Rosithern):** Mr. Speaker, the problem in relation to consumer affairs at this particular time in the history of Canada is, of course, one of the most important that this country faces today and one which concerns everyone here in the house and across the nation. The hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) should be commended for bringing forward this motion. Personally I feel it is not broad enough to meet the challenge that faces the people of this country today and particularly those who live in urban areas. I do not intend to go over the remarks that have been made by those who have referred to truth in advertising and consumer credit as these problems are recognized by all inside and outside the house as problems in respect of which action should

[Mr. Tolmie.]

have been taken earlier than it appears might be taken.

Rather than a department of consumer affairs I should like to see the establishment of a department of urban affairs to take care of problems not only in relation to consumer credit or credit as a whole but problems in relation to taxation, housing and recreation in the new urban areas that are emerging across this country. Everyone has heard or read the printed word about urban sprawl. While C.M.H.C. and the National Housing Act provide some leadership in the planning for these new communities there still remains a good deal to be done in regard to planning for the great expansion of urban communities.

I was intrigued by the remarks of the hon. member for Welland (Mr. Tolmie) when he referred to creeping inflation. I do not think we have creeping inflation in Canada today but rather galloping inflation. Every time we turn around we see an increase in the cost of living largely brought about by the imposition of taxation by the government in the face of opposition by other parties in this parliament. I am sure the hon. member for Welland was sincere in his remarks.

If the government wants to do something about this situation it should remove the sales tax immediately. This would do a great deal to alleviate the difficult situation in which everyone finds himself because of the high cost of consumer goods. It is interesting to note that today members on the government side of the house refer to inflation. Not long ago they did not like to admit that as a result of the imposition of the sales tax there occurred a tremendous increase in the cost of almost everything that people have to buy during their daily lives.

While I want to congratulate the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway on her motion I should like to reiterate the belief that what Canada needs and what this government needs is a department of urban affairs to deal with the much broader aspect of the problems which face people in urban areas.

**Mr. D. S. Macdonald (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity of speaking on this motion and perhaps my first words should be an expression of my appreciation to the hon. lady for allowing this motion to stand much longer than she probably wanted in order that I would have such opportunity.