

their rising costs. What I am assailing is the attitude of comfortable, well-fed people in authority who simply do not realize what so many Canadian families are going through and could not care less.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**An hon. Member:** What about the cake?

**Mrs. MacInnis:** I will get to the cake in a minute. On how many days in this House has the government introduced discussions on the Canadian family, the conditions of living for future Canadian citizens and how Canadians are getting on with regard to food, clothing, rent and other such things? In this day and age, such problems should be central to our work in the House of Commons. The wellbeing of the Canadian family ought to be the central core of the planning of this government, if indeed it is prepared to do any planning at all. We remember the story of Marie Antoinette. When she was told the people had no bread to eat, she said "Let them eat cake." People in authority now are saying, when told about people who cannot afford steak, "Let them eat hamburger." But what happens when the price of hamburger goes up as well as all the other precious proteins which are essential for body building? When food prices rise, as they have in recent months, they rise most rapidly and to the greatest heights for items such as meat, fish and fresh produce, that is, fruit and vegetables. These are the proteins, minerals, vitamins and body building foods. If they are neglected in early childhood, and during the critical periods of life, such as illness, people can never really fully recover from what has happened to them.

To quote Canada's official food rules at this point is to rub salt in wounds that are deep and sore. The food rules of Canada are in this very colourful chart which has been widely published. This is a good thing. These foods are good to eat. They should be eaten for the three meals every day for good health. It states the quantity of milk children should have each day, as well as adolescents, adults and expectant and nursing mothers. However, as one authority in Quebec said a few years ago, what is the use of telling an expectant mother how much milk she needs to provide calcium in her bones and teeth while carrying the child when she does not have enough milk for the children already here? Such a mother will give that milk to the children who are already living and take her chances on the future.

Two servings of fruit or juice make a satisfactory source of vitamin C, ascorbic acid, such as oranges, apples, vitaminized apple or tomato juice. I have seen mothers look at fresh produce, wonder which is the cheapest and how they can make a little orange juice stretch, sometimes reconstituted orange juice or orange drink, hoping there are some vitamins in it. They cannot afford the real thing. These people have to rely on the staff of life, bread, with some vegetables and cereals. When you see people in the poorer districts of town walking around grossly overweight, you know why. In most cases it is a combination of not enough of the protein foods and proper foods. They have to depend on the fattening foods. On top of that is the frustration and misery that sends them nibbling on whatever they can get to try and still the pangs of frustration as well as the

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pangs of appetite. Telling the Canadian people they should have meat and fish and fresh produce when they cannot possibly afford them is simply adding insult to injury and rubbing salt into wounds that are already very deep and very sore.

• (1530)

What hurts and angers people at this point is to learn that at this time, when the protective foods have been going up in price so steadily and so stealthily, at this very time the profits of the chain stores, the supermarkets, have been going up. When they learn and read in the papers, for it is no secret, that in the first quarter of this year the profits of Safeway went up by 40 per cent, those of George Weston by nearly 50 per cent, and those of Dominion Stores by 300 per cent—yes, 300 per cent, Mr. Speaker—they feel they are being betrayed not only by the supermarkets and the chains but by this government which has allowed that to happen without lifting a finger to help them.

**An hon. Member:** The Department of Consumer Affairs.

**Mrs. MacInnis:** The minister is evidently not sufficiently interested to be here. Under this government it has become fashionable to draw red herrings across the trail when such delicate matters as supermarket profits are mentioned. I suggest to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis) that this is one species of fish we need have no worry about conserving. The supply of red herrings is abundant and they are being used with great frequency. Someone says the supply of suckers, too. Yes, but the suckers are beginning to learn.

For example, the other evening when I was urging an investigation into supermarket prices, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Mr. Danson) drew quite a few of these red herrings across the trail for my benefit. Very delicately and courteously he drew them across, and I noticed these red herrings as they passed by slowly. First, he told me that there had been no violations of the Combines Investigation Act on the part of the supermarkets. He added that if I had proof of any such violations, or a deep suspicion that any were taking place, the Combines people would be pleased to hear about them. Now, Mr. Speaker, what is the use of a Combines Investigation Act if it is not to investigate? Instead, it would seem, the investigation is being left to others, though Heaven knows what those administering the Act would do with such evidence once it was to hand. I believe it is the duty of those administering the Combines Investigation Act to investigate situations of the kind my hon. friends and I have been bringing to their notice. Administration of the Combines Investigation Act is the responsibility of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and if the department is not prepared to protect the living standards of consumers, what is the use of it? What is the use of concentrating on such things as packaging, labelling, and minor annoyances though I will, of course, give the minister credit for what he is doing in this direction. What is worrying consumers is that they are being gouged more and more deeply for the food they have to buy. This is what the department and those responsible for the