

## THE SENATE

—

Tuesday, September 5, 1950

The Senate met at 3 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

## SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

## ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Senate resumed from Thursday, August 31, consideration of His Excellency the Governor General's speech at the opening of the session and the motion of Hon. Mr. Dupuis for an Address in reply thereto.

**Hon. John T. Haig:** Honourable senators, I feel a little ill at ease, for this does not seem to me like a regular session, to which one comes with all the grievances from his own part of the country and pours them forth for the information of the government of the day.

I wish first to follow the time-honoured custom of congratulating the mover (Hon. Mr. Dupuis) and the seconder (Hon. Mr. Barbour) of the motion for the Address. Unfortunately I could not follow the mover's speech in French. Although I think a translation of his speech should have appeared in *Hansard* by this time, it has not, so I am unable to make any reference to what he said. The common sense displayed in the speech of the seconder indicates to me that Prince Edward Island must be a pretty good province.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Mr. Haig:** The Speech from the Throne contains two items, one relating to railway-labour relations and the other to armaments, or in common parlance, the Korean question.

Parliament has passed legislation dealing with the railway issue. Though some honourable senators may have received communications from their constituents on this subject, I do not think I should refer to it further in this session. We expressed ourselves on the legislation before it was passed, and to comment further on it would do no good and would simply be a sort of aftermath.

The Speech from the Throne made no reference to the question recently raised in the other place, and which has been brought to my attention within the last few days, namely, the cost of living in Canada. When I arrived in Ottawa a few days before the session opened the cost of living index had reached 166.9 as against the 100 established during the period 1935-39. Five days later

it had reached 168.6. If it has continued to advance at the same rate, I would not care to guess at today's figure.

I sometimes get letters from women in my home town. One of these contains the following paragraph:

Bread went up a cent the other day, milk is going up a cent a quart, and the paper tonight says butter will be up a cent. A pound of sugar also is up a cent, and is in short supply here, right in the midst of the canning season.

Those items all seriously affect the cost of living. The reason I raise this question is that during the railway strike a statement was made on behalf of the men about the height to which the cost of living had climbed. I think it was the Minister of Finance who some three or four years ago announced that the cost of living index had reached 145, and that he thought it might go up another point or two. Well, it is now up to 168.5, and if what that housewife says is correct—and I assume that it is—the end is not yet.

How will it end? What policies are being suggested by the government to prevent a further rise in living costs? If the index goes higher we will have another round of wage demands all across the country, and quite properly so. I am not attempting to defend what labour does or what labour fails to do, for I do not know how wage-earners with families can keep up with the cost of living today. It seems to me that the government must come forward with some cure for this trouble. Although the recent strike was no doubt the result of increased living costs, no mention is made of this problem in the Speech from the Throne. It is not as important, perhaps, as the Korean situation, but it is an every-day topic of conversation and is the anxious concern of every householder in this country. Yet the government offers no solution for this problem.

**Hon. Mr. Farris:** What do you suggest?

**Hon. Mr. Haig:** I expected that some distinguished gentleman would ask me that question. My reply is that that is one question which I do not have to answer, because I am not responsible for government policy.

**Hon. Mr. Farris:** An answer might be very useful to the country.

**Hon. Mr. Haig:** I am not a supporter of government policy. The government got itself elected a year ago on a promise that it would do a good job, and so on. Now what is the government doing? Let me tell my honourable friend that in another place it has been said that the taxes which were cut off just before the election may have to be put on again. We will then be paying more for taxation, and the cost of living will be still