

some cases it is due perhaps to a particular concern attempting to take advantage of a demand which is so great that it will pay any price. I am not prepared to adopt the method adopted by the hon. member and select a few companies with large percentages of increase and say that that is the general picture, and I am certainly not prepared to agree with him that that is one of the main reasons why there has been some increase in the cost of living.

Mr. COLDWELL: I did not say that.

Mr. ABBOTT: I do not know whether there are any other points that I wish to make. As the hon. member knows, in the legislation that is still before the house there is the power to reimpose ceilings in cases where it is considered to be in the public interest to do so. I would hope that that will not be necessary; I would hope that the common sense of the people of this country and the operation of the law of supply and demand, which has never been proved to be wrong, will show that it is not necessary to do that. In the case of some abnormal situation where the government felt that the public were being exploited, speaking for myself at any rate, I can say, as the minister responsible for the administration of the act, that we would not have any hesitation in asking for powers which I feel sure the house would give us.

I have nothing more to add to what I have said, but I wish to repeat what I said at the outset. Most of the cases in which there has been an increase in price have been due to an inevitable increase in cost, particularly in those cases where previously controlled prices included subsidies.

Mr. CLARENCE GILLIS (Cape Breton South): Mr. Speaker, I am assuming that the amendment moved by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggan (Mr. Coldwell) is in order and will eventually be voted upon by this house. I make that statement because I think, if hon. members read the amendment, they will see that it places the entire matter of controls squarely before hon. members to be voted upon at this time. When that vote is taken it will largely determine the final disposition of the omnibus bill now before this house, because it happens that hon. members are being asked to vote upon the principles contained in that bill.

Mr. ILSLEY: If that is the case, it is out of order.

Mr. GILLIS: I am just asking the Speaker if this question is before the house for that purpose. I am going to read the amendment

[Mr. Abbott.]

again in order to refresh the memories of those who are listening. You cannot discuss controls piecemeal; you cannot take up only one phase because they are all inclusive. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) cannot get up and say airily, "We know for a fact that prices are rising, but we are not responsible; the law of supply and demand is going to regulate things in the future because it has always done so in the past". I am not accepting that statement as being correct. The law of supply and demand has not regulated anything in the past and it is not going to do so in the future.

Then the minister makes the statement, "We are removing subsidies and price ceilings". When you take that action you give the green light to anyone in this country who wants to exploit the people; you give them the opportunity of doing so without any regulation by the government. Apparently that is the government policy as indicated by the statement of the Minister of Finance. I am assuming that, when the amendment is voted upon, the members of this house are going to record their individual opinions as to whether price ceilings should be reimposed in this country as they were during the war and if as far as possible the standard of living established during the war for the Canadian worker should be reset. Some people have suggested that prices should be rolled back to June, 1946, in order to reestablish the standards that existed at that time.

If you make an analysis of how things are today as compared with how they were in June, 1946, you will find that the average wage-earner and salaried worker in this country has lost a large percentage of his income in increased prices, particularly on the essentials of life.

As I said a moment ago, I am going to read this amendment again. The members of this group do not think that when they place an amendment before this house it is done for political shadow-boxing. When the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggan moved this amendment he did so deliberately for the purpose of giving each and every member of this house an opportunity to rise in his place and record his opinion. The amendment reads:

That all the words after the word "that" to the end of the question be struck out and the following substituted therefor:

"This house desires to record its opinion that the government should give consideration to the immediate restoration of price control on and lower prices for the necessities of life, particularly articles of food and clothing, shelter, household appliances, and supplies and machinery needed by the farmers in connection with their work;