

Bread Company increased its price for the 24 ounce loaf by one cent.

Though the Registrar General is new to his job it is high time that he looked into matters affecting consumers. On June 16, in the speech in which he outlined his plans for the whole department under his control, he said, as reported on page 1608 of *Hansard*:

It is all very well to go off in all directions like a chicken with its head off, but I feel this would only cause unnecessary distortions in marketing practices and would provoke more difficulties than it would solve. If I were to suggest something which perhaps is un-Canadian, I might say I think we should have facts before we have policy. I intend to proceed with all deliberate speed in that fashion.

I am afraid that Canadian consumers will get the idea, if they have not already got it, that the minister is proceeding with more deliberation than speed, when one considers the price increases of commodities such as sugar and bread that I have spoken of tonight. The cost of living index is steadily creeping upward and has done so for items such as rent, household appliances, as well as many other commodities which are taken into account in the cost of living index.

I appreciate that the minister cannot single handed investigate what is happening. He cannot run to the bakeries to ask why prices are going up; nor can he go to sugar refineries to ask why their prices are rising. I believe that there should be a board—some of us have called it a prices review board—to look into price increases and to determine whether they are justified by increased costs that manufacturers have to pay.

I notice that when the prices of bread charged by Christie's were increased, H. A. Vivian, vice president of sales for Christie's Bread division of National Biscuit Company of New York, refused to say what the price increase is to retailers. He did not want the public to know what the dealer margin is. The joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons on prices feels that that is exactly what the consumer should know. I urge the minister to establish within his department at once a fact finding body to determine why prices are going up.

The consumers are being most patient. The costs of bread, milk, sugar, housing and rents have increased, raising the cost of living. The price of milk has increased recently, as has the price of sugar. The cost of housing and of medical services has risen, together with many other items which make up the cost of living. Increasingly consumers will want to

know why they are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet.

If the minister knows, let him tell us tonight why the cost of sugar increased in Vancouver. That is a specific inquiry I have to make. If he can do so, let him also tell us why there have been increases in the prices of bread and milk—increases which have caused great concern to families across this country. If the hon. gentleman does not know the reason, I should like him to tell us what steps he will take to ascertain it under his fine program of finding out the facts before making policy.

Hon. John N. Turner (Registrar General): I wish to say to the hon. lady in reply to the specific question she asked that Canadian refined sugar prices react almost immediately to changes in the world price for raw sugar. As a result of the Middle East crisis, world raw sugar prices advanced in early June and prices for refined sugar went up accordingly. Thus the B.C. Sugar Refinery in Vancouver, which was selling 100 lbs of cane sugar on June 1 for \$7.85 had by June 5 raised its price to \$8.95 per 100 lbs. Between June 5 and June 20 four reductions in price were made and by June 20 the refinery price was down to \$7.40 per 100 lbs, lower than it had been on June 5. Similar price changes were made by the refiners in eastern Canada. It is to be hoped that retail prices will soon reflect the decreases in refinery prices which have taken place since June 5, if they have not already done so.

On the general question of prices, I wish to say to the hon. lady that constitutionally neither the federal government nor parliament has the authority to impose pervasive controls over the price of goods and services, except in a national emergency such as war. Consequently parliament would not have the authority to enact legislation regulating prices.

The movement of prices depends on a number of complicated factors. Some of the factors depend on world economic conditions; others relate to domestic fiscal, monetary and tariff policy. The conditions and economic expectations of the marketplace also come into play.

Under the Combines Investigation Act it is the responsibility of the Director of Investigation and Research to scrutinize all significant price movements which come to his attention and which may involve illegal restraints on competition. He is charged under that statute with the duty of initiating an