

proposed committee would be of any real value. I believe the best authority to whom we can turn is the Prime Minister himself. Speaking on February 2, when introducing the resolution, he said this:

Once they are convinced that, having regard to an existing situation, prices are just and reasonable, they will be content to try and find ways of making necessary adjustments—

I do not know what those adjustments could be. It could only mean that they would be content to live on a lower standard of living. Then he goes on:

—but what they do not like is the idea that some individual or firms or corporations are profiting unduly at their expense—

That is a definite statement, that they are profiting at their expense unduly.

—and that others are hoarding in a manner which prevents the people from getting the benefit of that plenty which there may be in the land—although it is not as great a plenty as it may have been at other times.

It will be noted that the Prime Minister had no doubt in his own mind as to whether there is undue profiting—which is another way of saying “profiteering”. He makes the definite statement that people do not like the profiteering and hoarding that is going on.

Then, turning to another page, we find a most significant statement, if taken in relation with this one.

Mr. SMITH (Calgary West): I do not interpret that English the way you do at all, may I say.

Mr. ZAPLITNY: You can place your own interpretation upon it. Then, on the next page we find this:

The committee is not intended to be a prosecuting tribunal; it is hoped it may save the need for prosecutions.

Well, in one place we are told that the people do not like the hoarding and profiteering that is going on, and in another place we are told that this committee may save the need for prosecutions. What inference can be drawn from those two statements? It is that if profiteering and hoarding is going on, the hope is that this committee will not result in prosecutions, but will act as a sort of white-wash to avoid anyone's being embarrassed by the investigation. I cannot see that the government is serious in proposing the setting up of this committee, if we are to judge by the speeches of those who are supporting it.

I said a while ago that the Minister of Finance has not spoken, but that we have heard from other ministers. One of them was the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner),

[Mr. Zaplitny.]

who spoke about the position of agriculture in this country at the present time. I am not going to refer at length to what he said, but there are two statements or two assertions which are worthy of some little scrutiny. With one of them I thoroughly agree. He, I think, proved most conclusively that the farmers of this country have been called upon to carry an undue share of the price of stabilizing the economy of the country, because his own figures and arguments prove that not only did the farmers pay their share of taxes which went eventually into subsidies in all directions, but they subsidized those who are the consumers of their food products directly out of their own pockets by providing cheaper foods, or by providing foods at cheaper prices than they otherwise could have received. In other words, the farmers have subsidized the consumers in two ways: first, they did it indirectly through taxation; and, second, they did it directly because they had to accept lower prices than they otherwise would have received.

The other statement he made was that farmers in this country have in recent years experienced better prices than ever before in the history of Canada. I shall not go over the whole map to find figures, but comparing 1947, the most recent figures I could get, with 1920, for example, the farmer was in a much better position in 1920 than in 1947 in relation to the prices of farm products and the prices he paid for farm implements. It is illusory to talk merely of prices because they are simply a reflection of purchasing power at a given time, and if the value of the dollar falls by 50 per cent the price does not mean what it meant before. So, instead of taking prices only I am going to give a comparison of farm commodities in exchange for farm implements. In 1920 it took only 99 bushels of No. 1 northern Manitoba wheat to buy a double disc drill. These are dominion bureau of statistics figures. In 1947 it took 239 bushels, if we take the initial price of wheat. Of course participation would cut down the number of bushels required to buy the same drill. To buy a binder in 1920 took 110 bushels, and in 1947, 295 bushels. To buy a mower in 1920 took 38 bushels, and in 1947, 112 bushels. To buy a gang plow in 1920 took 65 bushels, and in 1947, 128 bushels. Certainly on the basis of wheat it cannot be said that the farmer is in a better position in 1947 to buy farm implements.

Mr. GIBSON (Comox-Alberni): How about his mortgage?