

*Guaranteed Income*

thing looked fine and employment was increasing. He pointed out that more people were employed in Canada than ever before, that our standard of living was rising and that everything was rosy. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, it is not rosy for a very large number of people; it is not rosy for those who cannot afford the bare necessities of life at present-day prices. The hon. member mentioned a number of things that had been done with respect to such items as oil, bread, milk and beef. Surely the Liberal Party is not going to take any credit for that, because that was the price the NDP extracted for supporting the government.

Let me add that even we may have thought those programs out poorly, because they were only a bargaining position. But again let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, they were really terrible programs when put into effect by the government because it did not have any rationale for putting them into effect. Even yet the government has not started to sit down to try to rationalize rising costs and their impact upon persons who are least able to afford them.

I think it is true to say that Mrs. Plumptre should go, and I would add that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Gray), should also go because he is of absolutely no value. Really, we have not done anything in this House about the cost of living; we have not done anything about putting controls on food prices; we have not done anything about restrictive trade practices. It is interesting to note that recently seven cement companies in British Columbia were charged under the Combines Investigation Act. What did we do with those companies, Mr. Speaker? We fined them \$500,000. But how much money did they make? They probably made \$100 million from the illegal practices in which they were engaged.

I suggest that if the Nielson company raises the price of chocolate bars today, then tomorrow all other chocolate companies will raise their prices because they all operate as a combine. Really, Mr. Speaker, there is no longer anyone in the Conservative Party who favours competition. In fact we do not have competition in this country. We have made all kinds of tax concessions to corporations, so that in effect we have eliminated the possibility of competition.

When one bread company raises the price of bread, all bread companies raise their price. I can give one example of a case raised by one of my constituents who pointed out that a specific commodity was 50 cents higher in one store than in another store in the same community. What was the result? The Department of Consumer Affairs drew this to the attention of Mike's supermarket, which then reduced the price by 50 cents. But, Mr. Speaker, that price is still 30 cents higher than in many of the chain stores in Toronto. Incidentally, this information comes from the Department of Consumer Affairs.

We really have not decided to do anything about that problem. We have not decided to cut out gouging. We have not decided to put in competition. Think what would happen if we considered buying into the food industry in the way we have in other fields. Suppose we went to one of the major chains and said, "Now you are operating a chain store and a wholesale business for us and you will supply 15 basic food commodities at a price we will set which will be reasonable for all those on low, fixed

[Mr. Peters.]

incomes. You can do whatever you like with the other commodities you sell, raise their prices as high as you like, make what profit you like on them and that profit will pay for the 15 basic commodities." That might be one way to reduce prices. But it is not what we did with bread, because the consumer did not achieve any saving on bread and the producer did not get anything out of it. In fact, he was asked to subsidize bread by \$1.50 a bushel. Without any direct subsidies, the price of bread has increased.

The story was different with milk because there was strict marketing legislation in effect, as a result of which the price of milk reflected the 5 cents that the federal government gave to the provincial governments. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) could not stabilize the price of beef on the same basis. In fact, I think he said quite clearly that he could do nothing more than he had done under the circumstances, because the producers will not get together and enter into an arrangement that would allow orderly marketing so that a subsidy could be provided to keep the producers in business.

Mr. Speaker, I point out that if the producers go out of business, then the price of beef will automatically go up. If such an arrangement were in effect, the minister would be able to subsidize the consumer at the same time so that the price he paid would be fair and he would not be gouged by the middleman and others out to make a profit.

I would like to see a vote on this motion. I would like to know whether the Liberal government is interested in doing something about the cost of living in a meaningful way, and at the same time maintain a guaranteed income for those at the bottom of the income scale.

**An hon. Member:** Then let's have a vote.

**Mr. Peters:** The hon. member raises a good question. We will have many opportunities to vote. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that so far as I am concerned if the government pretty soon does not start to do something fundamental about some of the problems, it will not get my support. But I hasten to add, having listened to the Conservatives and the alternatives they have put forward, that I think they are less entitled to my support than the government, considering the fiddling around they have been doing with a very serious problem.

May I call it six o'clock?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** I gather that two minutes extra were allocated to the hon. member, and therefore he has finished his speech. It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock tonight.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

**AFTER RECESS**

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Caouette (Charlevoix):** Mr. Speaker, I heard with interest some speeches delivered this afternoon and I find it rather strange once again that some members are more interested in playing politics than in really looking