

Oral Questions

Mr. Stanfield: I want to know your system.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): —in a free society, and he has relied in the past on a compulsory system. We rejected that because of the rigidities built into it and because of the fact that it places constraints on the expansionary potential of the economy. My hope is that the facts, as they are presented to Canadians in terms of our current unemployment rate, the current rate of inflation and the comparative escalation of costs in Canada compared with those in the United States, our closest competitor, and those in Europe, will be such that if we can mobilize a general climate of opinion in favour of this program, it has a good chance of succeeding.

INFLATION—MINISTER'S VIEW OF ORIENTATION OF ECONOMY
IN RELATION TO OTHER INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): My question is also to the Minister of Finance. Relating the domestic consensus talks to the international scene, is it the position of the minister that the Canadian economy should be oriented in a countervailing position to that of other countries to avoid a new synchronization of expansionary policy among industrialized nations, which the minister stated last evening had provoked Canadian and worldwide inflation over the past few years?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): No, sir.

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FINANCE

REQUEST FOR NAME OF ACTING MINISTER

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Considering the delicate stage of the consensus guidelines and the fragile state of the Canadian economy, would the Prime Minister tell the House what minister will be taking over the duties of the finance minister as acting finance minister, particularly that of talking the economy back to health, while the current Minister of Finance is visiting other countries?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): It will be the Acting Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Stevens: May we know the name of the Acting Minister of Finance?

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. member for Westmount.

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TRANSPORT

FREIGHT RATES—APPLICATION FOR 20 PER CENT INCREASE—
POSSIBILITY OF INTERVENTION BY MINISTER TO PREVENT

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport. In view of the fact that the Canadian Railway Freight Association

[Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton).]

has filed a tariff application for a 20 per cent increase in class freight rates effective May 5, and in view of the commitment of the minister in February, at the meeting of transport ministers in Calgary, to prevent further horizontal percentage increases in rail freight rates, can the minister inform the House whether he approves of this new 20 per cent increase in class rates, and if not, whether he intends to intervene to prevent the increase?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): I think I have stated my position on this across the board increase proposed by the railways. My answer was quite clear, and I am still opposed to what they are trying to achieve.

Mr. Benjamin: In view of the fact that these class rates are ceiling rates for the railways and set the pattern for all the other rates, that some commodity rates are tied directly to class rates and will automatically increase, and in view of the predictions that the increase in class rates will inevitably lead to further increases in other categories, can the minister give his assurance that, in accordance with his Calgary undertaking, no across the board increases in other categories will be permitted?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Under the authority given to me by law I will surely get in touch with the CTC and see to it that what I said is really accepted by the railways.

Mr. Benjamin: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister clarify how he intends to carry out this commitment? Precisely what kinds of increases, in what categories is he pledged to prevent? For instance, what freight rates? The only one that he can prevent, possibly, is the rate on walrus tusks from Inuvik to Frobisher Bay. What is he going to do?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am not sure the question period would be the appropriate place for the minister to attempt an exhaustive review of all the categories in which there might be intervention.

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

EFFECT OF LONGSHOREMEN'S STRIKE ON FEED GRAIN
SUPPLIES—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Albert Béchard (Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture.

Has he received a telegram from the Quebec poultry producers association stating their concern about the situation resulting from the strike of longshoremen at the Montreal, Quebec City and Trois-Rivières harbours, for producers now have poultry feed for 24 hours only, and, if yes, what does he intend to do?

[English]

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, we have received many telegrams but I am not sure if I have seen that one concerning the possible shortage of feed grains. The grain elevator in Quebec City has been opened for two or three days now and grain is moving out of that area. Other ships are moving into the