

which were really collected in April, showed a decrease. Can the minister explain to the House the apparent cover-up, or collusion, and why he did not report his own department's food price index last Thursday as scheduled? Why were the figures not released as they were supposed to be?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I will have to check into that matter and find out.

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THE ECONOMY

INITIATIVES TO BE PLACED BEFORE PARLIAMENT

Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood): Madam Speaker, I will make this next question as easy as I can. It is for the Prime Minister who, I know, does not like talking about economics.

Quite apart from the mix-up which has taken place with respect to these figures, it is clear that the mix-up itself is less important than the hard fact that the cost of living has reached the level of a national economic crisis, and new initiatives are definitely required. On Sunday when the Prime Minister came away from Meach Lake he said:

We talked about inflation a fair amount, and we think the Minister of Finance . . . will be implementing policies which will have a beneficial effect.

Quite simply, can the Prime Minister tell us what these new initiatives are which the cabinet will be putting before Parliament? Can the hon. gentleman give us the assurance that these initiatives will be put before us this month so that the Canadian consumer, farmer, small businessman and home owner can obtain some relief from the inflationary and high interest rate policies of his government?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I believe the Minister of Finance made it clear at the same meeting that he was unlikely to be considering anything in the nature of a mini-budget before the summer. When I was alluding to the policies of the minister I was alluding to the policies which he has already discussed in various forums and in this House. I am told he discussed them in an excellent speech he gave in Saskatchewan last Saturday. I recommend that the hon. member read the minister's speech and he will find out that one of our former colleagues in this House was chosen as the new leader of the Liberal party in Saskatchewan, Mr. Ralph Goodale.

As the hon. member said, I am not all that anxious to speak on behalf of the Minister of Finance. But I might be able to shed some light on the question he asked of my colleagues a moment ago. It seems to me that the important thing about statistics is that you always compare statistics taken at one period with a like period. It would be completely wrong to skip a month, as the hon. member says, in order to get the CPI figures, and to try to compare them with the figures given at the same date by the Department of Agriculture. The virtue of gathering statistics—if the hon. member can understand this—is that they are gathered at set periods. They are not

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brought forward or backward in order to prove the case put forward by the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood.

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COMBINES

DETAILS OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In his typically sanctimonious attitude the minister has been travelling across the country asking Canadians for support in strengthening combines legislation. The minister has produced a discussion paper, part of which recommends, curiously enough, a ban on participation in international cartels.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speyer: Specifically, the paper says:

—the increasing concentration in world trade has given rise to concerns over the dangers of the cartelization of world trade and a number of countries have taken action recently against international cartels—

Can the minister tell the House whether or not the formation of international cartels with undertakings similar to the uranium cartel will become illegal if this proposed legislation is passed by Parliament? Second, can the minister tell the House whether or not there will be any teeth in this proposed legislation to make it illegal for Canadian government officials to participate in co-ordinating cartels?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, it is true that I am now attending a series of meetings with representatives of various national organizations to discuss possible amendments to the Competition Act. I am pleased to see that the hon. member is concerned with the question and that he has constructive suggestions to make. I hope that when the bill is considered in the House, he will see to it to use his influence so that the legislation may pass quickly with the support of Conservative members.

[English]

Mr. Speyer: Madam Speaker, this is another example of a minister refusing to answer a direct question.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PUBLICATION OF REPORT

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): My supplementary question is to the same minister and it pertains again to the strengthening of the competition laws in Canada. Does the minister envisage giving to the director of combines investigations the power to table in Parliament, and to make public, his reports on the investigation of international cartels, as the hon. gentle-