

Oral Questions

● (1450)

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I really cannot at this time say whether or not I will be making a statement this week or next week on that subject.

Mr. Stanfield: I have one further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I should like to ask the Prime Minister, particularly in view of the great concern he expressed here today, whether he is not prepared to take some emergency action to help at least those on fixed incomes, bearing in mind that old age pensioners have to wait about a year for any adjustment in their pensions now and that the rate of escalation in the Canada Pension Plan is still limited to 2 per cent, despite the fact that the rate of inflation during the past 12 months has been some 8 per cent?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will realize that a very few months ago there was an increase of 17 per cent in the old age pension. The Leader of the Opposition seems to indicate that this is not much, but I assure him that many old age pensioners are very grateful that the Liberal government introduced this matter.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. member for Prince Albert on a supplementary question.

SUGGESTED IMPOSITION OF PRICE AND WAGE CONTROLS—RESPONSE OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, yesterday when the Prime Minister was asked questions with regard to bringing in some form of price and wage controls he said that certain legislatures or certain governments in the provinces had expressed their opposition. Could he say, now that he has designated these governments, what the attitude was of the governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia when they were asked about the imposition of controls?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the governments to which I alluded yesterday are governments which are all on public record in this regard. I was not divulging anything that had been said at the federal-provincial conference which had not been said publicly on the outside. So far as the position of the other governments the right hon. gentleman mentioned is concerned, I must confess no memory of what they might have said outside but obviously the members of the opposition do and I would be very happy to quote any statement that had been made publicly on this subject.

SUGGESTED IMPOSITION OF PRICE AND WAGE CONTROLS—NEED FOR DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY BY PARLIAMENT—REASON FOR LACK OF ACTION

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): The Prime Minister apparently suffers from selective amnesia. Is it not a fact that under the law and under the cases decided in the Supreme Court of Canada the responsibility in this connection, while shared by the provinces, can be taken by the Dominion Government exclusively provided there is a declaration by parliament that there is an

[Mr. Stanfield.]

emergency. Does he not feel, under the circumstances, having regard to the tremendous increase in costs, that we are now today in a position of emergency and does he not feel that this House would be prepared to so declare if the government would give it an opportunity?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, obviously I cannot speak on behalf of other parties in this House. So far as our own party is concerned, we have stated what our policy is. The opposition may not be happy with it, but it is not a position of making our views unknown on that particular subject. I must confess that the views of the other parties will have to be expressed on behalf of those parties by their leaders or ex-leaders, as the case may be. So far as the other part of the question is concerned, it would really depend on what particular type of measure the government were to introduce. The question of constitutionality, of course, would have to be examined, but it could be examined only if the right hon. gentleman asked a complete question about a particular type of measure, and then I would try to get a legal opinion for him on it.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister does not have a legal opinion on that now he has not read any of the judgments of the Supreme Court of Canada. I am amazed that a constitutional authority, as he himself has confessed he is, has not read those judgments.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair recognized the right hon. gentleman for the purpose of asking a supplementary question and perhaps it might be asked now.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I was forced to mention that because of the extraneous alibi produced by the Prime Minister. According to press reports, the NDP governments are in favour of action along this line. Is the reason there is no action that the NDP opposition in this House upon whom he depends is against it?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for York South.

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FOOD PRICES REVIEW BOARD

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT BY MINISTER—POSSIBLE STRENGTHENING OF POWERS OF BOARD—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, at some other time I may be tempted to answer the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert.

Mr. Fairweather: Be brave.

Mr. Lewis: May I ask the Prime Minister the following question along the lines of some questions I asked him yesterday. In view of the unsatisfactory replies given by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs with regard to the work that is done or is not being done by the Food Prices Review Board, has the Prime Minister discussed the work of this board with the chairman or other