

about a program that was dismantled a month ago. That is not really the purpose of the question period as I understand it.

IMPACT OF INFLATION ON THE POOR AND ELDERLY

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Certainly, nobody expects the government to exercise restraint at the expense of the poor and the pensioners of this country. For example, the Canada Pension Plan has so far this year fallen behind by almost \$4 a month, in real terms, and OAS payments continue to fall behind in spite of indexing. The current round of inflation is leaning very heavily on these people, as evidenced by surveys in Toronto by Statistics Canada and other sources showing that half the old age pensioners of this country are falling below the poverty line.

● (1442)

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): We have a system in Canada whereby pensions increase in line with the CPI. There is a formula in the legislation. This is a system we have used for some years, and I do not intend to change it at this time.

Mr. McGrath: I regret the minister does not seem to be aware that in spite of indexing, old age pensioners and people receiving pensions under the Canada Pension Plan are falling behind. Does the government intend to bring in a measure prior to the adjournment for the summer recess to provide for a continuation of spouses' allowances to make provision for those who are hardest hit, female pensioners, and to provide for an adjustment in the income supplement which obviously is inadequate since indexing does not seem to meet the demand?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I have to deal with two different lines by opposition spokesmen: a few minutes ago the hon. member for York-Simcoe said we were spending too much, and now the hon. member for St. John's East wants us to spend even more.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

MCDONALD COMMISSION—EXAMINATION OF CABINET MEMBERS

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister: it relates to the activities of the McDonald commission and the investigation it is carrying out. In light of the statements made last week by the Deputy Prime Minister, and in view of the fact that the scheduling of the commission apparently parallels the vacillation of the Prime Minister in the calling of an election, can we have a definite assurance that the ministers of the Crown will be examined by the McDonald royal commission this September, and that there will be no further delay regardless of whether or not the Prime Minister gets up the nerve to call an election?

Oral Questions

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): I am sure the commission has not rearranged its schedule to take into account the possibility of an election. As I have indicated, as the Prime Minister has indicated and as the interested ministers have already stated, the ministers are prepared to appear before the commission when the commission decides to call them as witnesses. That is entirely up to the commission. If they had called the ministers this week, they would gladly have gone; and that will be the case in September. We shall make no effort to influence the timing of the appearance of ministers one way or another.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The fact is that the delay has not been commented upon by the minister. They have not shown any indication that they want to be examined by this commission. In light of a statement made by a former cabinet minister, the Hon. Mitchell Sharp, in which he indicated that deputy ministers should be held accountable, in the parliamentary sense, for their actions, and in view of the sorry record of this government of ministers not taking responsibility for any actions which may have been taken by themselves or their deputy ministers, I ask the Deputy Prime Minister one simple supplementary question, whether the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the former solicitor general, is legally responsible for the actions he and his department took following the warning that the former minister of national revenue had given that these actions may be illegal? Is it the position of the government that he is legally responsible, in view of that warning by the minister of national revenue?

Mr. MacEachen: The hon. member is laying on the table, so to speak, a whole series of allegations and I have no intention of commenting on the accuracy or otherwise of several of them. All I know is that the matter is before the McDonald commission, which has very wide terms of reference, that ministers are ready to appear when called, that the matters which are of interest to the hon. members will obviously be brought forward, that questions will be asked of them, and that ultimately the commission will reach a conclusion.

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TRADE

JAPANESE TARIFFS ON IMPORTS

Mr. F. A. Philbrook (Halton): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. In view of a continuing policy by Japan of protectionism and the erection of trade barriers, many blatant examples of which could be provided, and the stated interest of the hon. gentleman's department in Canadian trading companies, will the minister inform us whether any new measures are being taken by the government to persuade Japan to truly open its markets to Canadian businesses, especially small business?

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, only recently Japan reduced its tariff barriers on a whole host of articles and has expressed an