

Oral Questions

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I would have to answer the hon. member by saying that many competent observers completely disagree with his analysis of the situation. I would say that we should try to work for an energy agreement, not for those reasons, but for the reason that it is important that in this country we have an energy program upon which both orders of government will agree and will recognize to be in the best interests of the Canadian people.

Mr. Andre: How many people are you going to allow to go bankrupt in the meantime?

Mr. Lalonde: This is what this government has been concentrating its efforts on since last year. We recognize that the previous government in which the hon. member served did not succeed in getting an agreement. Unfortunately we did not either.

An hon. Member: We were there nine months, you have been there 16 years. Where have you been?

Mr. Lalonde: However, we are working hard at it and I am confident that with good will on all sides we will be able to do so.

Mr. Wilson: Madam Speaker, I refer the minister to articles by Wood Gundy, Greenshields, and Rodney Anderson, all within the past week, each of which have attributed the weakness in the Canadian dollar to his energy policy, and that is the reason for the high interest rates we have today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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THE ECONOMY**GOVERNMENT POSITION ON INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY**

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): My supplementary is for the Right Hon. Prime Minister. Since there has been much speculation arising out of the Meach Lake meeting last week to the effect that we will see greater government intervention in the economy somewhat along the lines of the National Energy Program, and since that program has caused the weakness in the Canadian dollar and the high interest rates we have today, would the Prime Minister make a commitment to the House that before this industrial strategy discussed last weekend is introduced and implemented, he would table a white paper outlining the full extent of the industrial strategy so that Canadians will have an opportunity to comment on this and hopefully avoid the mistakes made in the energy program?

Mr. Lalonde: You had high interest rates before the energy program.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I could answer the hon. member most simply by saying to him that the premises on which his question is based are completely false, as was the statement made in a motion

under Standing Order 43 before question period. The premises of that question about the highly interventionist and socialist government are completely without foundation.

An hon. Member: Read your own books.

Mr. Trudeau: Nothing of that nature was discussed at Meach Lake, and if the hon. member wants to have an opinion on who is socialist in this House, he should ask the best witness, the Leader of the New Democratic Party.

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● (1430)

STATISTICS CANADA**SURVEY OF FOOD PRICES**

Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood): Madam Speaker, my question is for a non-socialist minister, the Minister of Supply and Services, in his capacity as minister responsible for Statistics Canada. The Agriculture Canada retail price survey was released today and shows that the cost of food for home consumption in May increased .73 per cent, while the Statistics Canada report released on Friday showed a decrease of .7 per cent for last month. Incredibly, it would appear that the May food price figures put out by Statistics Canada actually relate to the last week in April, while Agriculture Canada's survey covered food price averages for all four weeks of May. Can the minister confirm that the Statistics Canada survey for May actually took place in April? Can he also confirm that if we took the May figures we would see an increase of 12.6 per cent—still a record level—rather than the much-vaunted decrease to 12.3 per cent which was banded about by the Prime Minister on Friday?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Minister of Supply and Services): Madam Speaker, I will have to take notice of that question and give the hon. gentleman a reply later.

Mr. Rae: Madam Speaker, that was the first answer.

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AGRICULTURE CANADA**RETAIL FOOD PRICE INDEX**

Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood): Madam Speaker, my next question is for the Minister of Agriculture if I can get his attention—I know it is lonely at the top but I will just make it one question.

The minister knows that in January his department made public the release dates for the monthly retail food price index. When the figures were released in January we were told that the retail price index would be released last Thursday. They did not come out Thursday, they came out today. It would appear that the May figures were not released last Thursday as scheduled because they showed an increase in food prices, whereas the CPI, which on Friday reported the May figures