

Oral Questions

bility, and I have my doubts about that, are there plans available so that the unorganized workers in Canada will be able to get even that rate of increase which the government may think is reasonable?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in the statement the Minister of Finance made at the federal provincial conference, a copy of which was tabled in the House by his excellent parliamentary secretary, it was indicated that the government had concern for the weaker sectors of the economy and those parts of the labour movement that are not organized and that there are provisions for a certain form of catchup for those who have fallen behind. I think the hon. member will see that the government is very concerned about getting greater equity for all parts of the economy.

Mr. Broadbent: Without doubting the concern expressed by the Prime Minister, the fact is that concern will not be translated into action for unorganized workers unless there is some specific mechanism to give them power in the economy to make that possible. Does the government have any plan to give the unorganized workers the effective strength to secure the increasing level of income to which they are entitled?

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. gentleman is asking a question which has to do with the extent of union organization in the country. This government has always taken the position that unionization should be encouraged and union ranks increased. As to whether the government has any specific mechanism in mind for dealing directly with unorganized workers, obviously not, because we have no precise hold on them. The market economy has always, of course, to face this problem; the hon. member knows that when salaries and wages go up they tend to follow in the unorganized sector. Indeed, very often they precede in the unorganized sector.

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE**BEEF AND VEAL COMMISSION—ALLEGED CONFLICT OF INTEREST OF COMMISSIONER**

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of Agriculture about the federal commission of inquiry on beef and veal prices.

Does the Minister of Agriculture know that the commissioners give rise to obvious conflicts of interest since Mr. Maxwell Mackenzie, who is a member of the commission, is one of the directors of International Multifoods, Mrs. Lydia Patry-Cullen comes from Steinberg Limited and there is only one cattle breeder sitting on that Commission? Can the minister assure the House that the commission will really uphold the interests of Canadian consumers and not those of producers or chain stores?

[English]

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): The members of this commission, as far as I know, are honest individuals. They come from different walks of life and add their knowledge to the commission so that evidence

[Mr. Broadbent.]

which is presented can properly be weighed. I have no doubt as to the integrity of those who make up this commission.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**INFLATION—PROPOSED MEETING OF UNION LEADERS CONCERNING CONSENSUS ON RESTRAINT—POSSIBILITY OF MEETINGS WITH OTHER GROUPS**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister or for the acting Acting Minister of Finance or for the excellent Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance as they may see fit. Can we get any confirmation with regard to the reported meeting of major Canadian union leaders on May 7 to make a decision with respect to the acceptance or rejection of the so-called consensus program? Can any of those three gentlemen I have mentioned give the House any details or information about this prospect?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I have been informed of the meeting but according to my understanding it is a meeting of labour leaders themselves to decide what response to give to the representations and suggestions made to them by the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Labour and other ministers. It is not something in which the government is directly involved.

Mr. Stanfield: Can the Prime Minister or either of the other two gentlemen indicate whether meetings of the other interested groups, the business element, for example, are scheduled for the same purpose, that is, to make decisions with regard to the consensus program and, if so, approximately what dates are likely?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Yes, Mr. Speaker, the process outlined by the Leader of the Opposition is the one which is being followed. I saw the item this morning with regard to the meeting which is to take place on May 7. I suspect this meeting has been scheduled in anticipation of discussions which will precede it among various groups within the labour movement; that is the meeting at which, presumably, they will discuss the results of the earlier meetings. The same sort of exercise will be carried out by other groups in the economy.

INFLATION—GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO HAVE PROGRAM DEVELOPED THROUGH CONSENSUS SEEKING ACCEPTED BY ALL GROUPS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): A final question to the Prime Minister who presumably believes that he and his government are putting forward a sound and equitable program to restrain inflation, one which is important to the welfare of our country and our citizens. I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether he will make a personal effort to persuade the principal groups in our economy on the labour and business side, before they take decisions, to accept the program that the government has developed in co-operation with them and which the government is putting forward.