

Oral Questions

VARIATION IN GROSS TRUCK WEIGHT REGULATIONS IN WESTERN PROVINCES—ACTION TO ACHIEVE UNIFORMITY

Mr. Ed Nelson (Burnaby-Seymour): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Transport I should like to try the parliamentary secretary. In view of the inconvenience and cost imposed on trucking firms by variations in interprovincial gross vehicle weight regulations and in view of the concern of the four western provinces about this matter, what steps is the Minister of Transport taking to establish higher and more uniform gross vehicle weights across the prairie provinces?

Mr. Joseph-Philippe Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): This is being looked into, Mr. Speaker. The minister also met with the trucking representatives and we also are waiting for a report from them at the present time.

Mr. Nelson: Mr. Speaker, may I ask whether discussion of this matter is taking place with the provincial ministers of highways?

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): I cannot speak for the minister on that particular subject, Mr. Speaker, but I presume this will be one of the topics.

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INDUSTRY

INCREASE IN LUMBER PRODUCT PRICES—MONITORING BY DEPARTMENT

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Noting that Domtar Limited of Montreal will increase its prices of lumber products by \$30 to \$35 effective April 1, has the minister conducted a study or monitored these price increases in lumber and related industries to ensure that these commodity increases are not disruptive in view of what was indicated in the throne speech and the Prime Minister's statement that action would be taken as in the case of oil.

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think this is a matter which would fall more particularly under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Mr. Ritchie: With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct the question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Has he carried out any study of increased prices in the lumber industry?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, we have been monitoring the situation very closely. From a high in April, I believe, of last year there has been a 30 per cent reduction as at the end of January. There has been a slight increase of as high as 15 per cent during the month of February, but my information is we can expect declining prices so far as lumber is concerned for the rest of the year.

[Mr. Trudeau.]

INCREASE IN WHOLESALE PRICE INDEX—POSSIBILITY OF CONTROLS ON COMMODITY PRICES

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my question originally was for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs but he has already indicated this type of question, which I had assumed would come under Consumer and Corporate Affairs, should go to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. I therefore direct it to that minister. With the wholesale price index having increased by 3.4 per cent in January and by 27 per cent in the past year and with textile products, for example, up 5.5 per cent in one month and wood products up 3.2 per cent, is the minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I assume the hon. member is now coming to his question.

Mr. Stevens: Your assumption is correct, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister contemplating placing controls on any of these commodities or on any other commodities?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman has referred to a number of products which are imported into the country and has referred specifically to textiles. Clearly a policy of import controls would not in any way assist the prices of those products as their price is affected by the world supply and demand situation. On the export side, we have looked at this very closely and in my view export controls would be counter-productive. They would have the effect of slowing down the kind of increases in supply we are anxious to see in order to bring about a better balance in supply and demand.

Mr. Stevens: I wonder whether the minister could state simply whether he plans any controls over any commodity at the present time?

Mr. Gillespie: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stevens: A supplementary—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member will be recognized for a last supplementary and then I will see the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre.

Mr. Stevens: My question is again directed to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. With the purchasing power of the average worker having fallen by \$5 a week and real wages having gone down by 2 per cent during the year, while corporate profits after taxes on a real basis went up 35 per cent, can the minister explain to the House who he feels had a very good year in 1973?

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