

Oral Questions

to the Quebec government while his chief, the Leader of the Opposition, suggested some days ago that this money be distributed fairly to all Quebec citizens. His party should first of all come to an agreement about the method to be used so as to put an end to the whole matter.

SALES TAX—POSSIBILITY OF WITHDRAWAL OF BILL C-56 AND RENEGOTIATION WITH PROVINCES

Mr. Heward Graffey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the right hon. Prime Minister.

In view of the clear statement by Mr. Ryan that the federal government's position is helping separatism in the province of Quebec, is the government now prepared to support the amendment suggested by the opposition, that is that Bill C-56 be withdrawn for one month and that the proposal be renegotiated with the provinces to correct the situation?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member could only tell us what we should do after one month! Renegotiate what? If his party had an idea about this, we could at least listen to their suggestion, but they cannot agree amongst themselves about what should be done.

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[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

UN DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the right hon. Prime Minister. I note that he will be addressing the special assembly on disarmament at the United Nations on Friday next, May 26.

Will the Prime Minister, either before he speaks there or upon his return, make a statement on motions in the House of Commons on the disarmament conference and Canada's initiatives, so that the Canadian Parliament and the Canadian people can participate in a serious effort to reverse the present trends toward immensely wasteful expenditures on arms which are a curse and a scandal to the world as a whole?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the support and the feelings of the hon. gentleman. I would be interested in debating these matters with the House of Commons and, hopefully, gaining support for the position of the Canadian government. I must point out to him, however, that the special assembly of the United Nations will be going on for as long as a couple of months and we would not be able to report to the House on the results of the conference until it is terminated.

If the hon. member wishes, we could debate the subject either on motions or on a special day. The time will be difficult to find as far as special days are concerned, but there are 8 or 10 opposition days which might be a good occasion to discuss this important subject. We would participate with pleasure.

[Mr. Trudeau.]

Mr. Brewin: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether it would be possible, after his visit, for him or the Secretary of State for External Affairs to let the Parliament of Canada know the progress and the prospects of this disarmament conference. I fully appreciate his point that a complete report must await completion of the conference, but I hope that we may not be here at that time. In any event, I think the people of Canada would like to know what is going on in this matter that so much affects their lives and the lives of everybody throughout the world.

Mr. Trudeau: I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that the government is willing to discuss this matter. The hon. member knows that between now and the end of June the government has less than 20 days at its disposal, and every day there arises a suggestion from the opposition that we do certain things with that time. Today the opposition has suggested we should bring back the independence of parliament. The government House leader has stated that he can bring that forward too, but time is limited between now and the end of June.

The hon. member may want to follow my suggestion of doing it on an opposition day, or having me answer questions on the subject from members of the opposite side when I return. I would gladly give answers as lengthy as the House permits.

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FINANCE

SALES TAX—REQUEST FOR WITHDRAWAL OF BILL C-56 AND RENEGOTIATION WITH PROVINCES

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. In defence of the federal income tax rebate to Quebec taxpayers, the Minister of Finance made the unfounded statement that Alberta receives its share in grants to the oil industry, completely disregarding the fact that all Canadians benefit therefrom through lower than world oil prices, thus leaving Alberta out in the cold.

I ask the minister if he is now prepared to admit his error, to amend Bill C-56 by removing the tax refund provision, and to renegotiate this policy in the best interests of Canada's ten provinces.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the first day that I talked to the minister of finance of Alberta I said that the scheme of the federal government was to compensate the provinces that were faced with sales tax. Some provinces have a sales tax of 11 per cent, so we wanted to help them to reduce it. I told this very clearly to the minister of finance of Alberta.

At the same time, I said that as they do not have any sales tax in Alberta, there were other provisions in the budget that would be helpful to that province. Evidently the oil tax break that was given to heavy oil and the tar sands will help the economy of Alberta. For that matter, when we decided to do