

Oral Questions

opments at the Conference Centre with respect to the constitutional question.

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, and as was indicated by all first ministers coming out of their sessions yesterday, there has been some progress on a number of issues. There still remain a number of difficult issues to be undertaken. While there has been progress on some individual items, it is such that, until such time as there is a broad agreement on the package, the deal will not be consummated.

The report I received just before coming into the House is that the work is ongoing, the mood is excellent, and the First Ministers are working hard. It is hoped progress can continue today. At an appropriate time, when all the issues can be agreed upon and a package consummated, hopefully we will then be able to accept the good news. That is our hope.

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, fully understanding the reservations that the Deputy Prime Minister has and the reasons for them, I want to ask if he can nevertheless give some details about any agreements which may have been reached about the possible composition of a reformed, elected Senate?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I can only refer to the statements made in the press which I believe are a fair reflection. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on any one specific or given issue because I think it is fair to say that, until such time as there is agreement on a broad range of issues, all First Ministers are not prepared to sign any package.

While I would like to be as helpful as I possibly can, I think the hon. member will realize the dynamics of the discussions are such that things change minute by minute. But, I repeat, there is a very firm and strong commitment in that room to put the unity of the nation first. The negotiations are going very well. They are working very hard and I am confident, given the mood I discern, that there will be a successful outcome. I am

sure that is a view shared by all hon. members of the House.

* * *

SALARIES

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, the minister said “we must all fight inflation by reducing underlying cost pressures that push up prices. The greatest of these pressures by far is wage costs”.

Why is the minister attacking wage costs, which actually fell in real terms by 3.4 per cent over the 1980s, instead of going after bonus increases of \$40,000 to \$80,000 to senior executives in crown corporations such as CN or instead of attacking Governor Crow’s increase of \$40,000 to \$93,000? Is it right that the rich get so much richer and the poor, the working people of the country, get hammered again and again?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to the hon. member’s attention the level of salary increases throughout the Public Service. The broad averages have been 4 per cent to 4.2 per cent, as well as in the senior levels of the Public Service, the deputy minister level. Ministers and members of Parliament have had salary increases of 1 per cent less than the inflation rate during the last seven, eight, or nine-year period. The federal government itself, I believe, has shown very clear leadership in the battle against inflation.

The hon. member has referred to certain Crown corporations. He knows quite well that the rules for increase in remuneration of Crown corporations are related to the comparability of the senior employees of those crown corporations to the private sector. They are subject to review by an appointed advisory committee that has been in place for the last eight or ten years. I believe this is a legitimate way of arriving at salary levels of senior executives of crown corporations.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely the point. If we look, for instance, at a recent study by Towers Perrin of top executives throughout the world, we see that, in fact, Canadian top