

Oral Questions

GOVERNMENT ACTION TO COMBAT INFLATION

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I would like to go to the Prime Minister with a final question on this matter.

An hon. Member: You were there this morning, Ed.

Mr. Broadbent: There is for cabinet consideration a document that points out that wages have not been the cause of inflation, but instead singles out such items as interest rates and food and energy prices as being the real and principal causes of inflation, and then recommends that public servants' wages should be singled out for attack as a method of dealing with inflation.

Could the Prime Minister tell the House why the government is not zeroing in on the causes of inflation which, the document acknowledges, are interest charges and energy and food prices, and instead is attacking the victims of inflation, namely, ordinary wage earners?

● (1430)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I know nothing of this so-called secret document, but I will recognize that in answer to a question in this House, I think about a month ago, I mentioned that very point to the Leader of the New Democratic Party. I said that the causes of inflation are mainly energy prices and higher food prices and interest rates. The hon. member will recall that I indicated to him that at least the first two of those elements, and probably the third, are not controlled in Canada. We do not control the price of energy we import and, with respect to Canadian energy, he knows we have a policy which is to keep our prices below the world prices.

In so far as food is concerned, the Leader of the New Democratic Party also knows—and I said this a month ago—that when we have a type of controls that democratic countries introduce, they generally do not hit food. They do not hit food at the farm gate, and this is one of the causes now of a higher cost of living.

The same explanation has been given by the Minister of Finance with respect to interest rates. One of the reasons why they are high is because they are even higher in the United States.

This so-called secret document does not seem to be very secret. It says what I said in this House about a month ago.

As to why we would be enjoining—the hon. member shakes his head no. I will see what his supplementary question is.

Madam Speaker: The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

REVIEW OF DOSSIER OF MOVEMENT OF CARTOGRAPHY SERVICE TO SHERBROOKE

Mr. Irénée Pelletier (Sherbrooke): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Right Hon. Prime Minister. In 1974 the Government of Canada decided to go ahead with the relocation in the provinces of certain agencies and branches of departments. Two of 23 such projects could not be carried out because the Quebec government refused to substitute the Canada clause for the Quebec clause and thus unilaterally change the agreement between the federal government and the provincial governments under which civil servants moving to any province could have their children educated in the language of their choice. Could the Prime Minister tell the House if acceptance of the constitutional proposals by the House and Mr. Ryan's expressed intention of replacing the Quebec clause by the Canada clause would prompt the federal government to reopen the file on the relocation of mapping in Sherbrooke?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Madam Speaker, the answer is very clear because one of the obstacles preventing the relocation of the mapping branch in Sherbrooke is precisely the fact that the Quebec government does not want to apply the Canada clause. That clause is contained in the charter which is now before the House and, unless I am mistaken, that clause is endorsed as well by Mr. Ryan, the leader of the Quebec Liberal party, who in turn has gained the support of the Progressive Conservative Party in the House. Consequently, considering the circumstances of which we are aware, we hope that in the near future the mapping branch will be relocated in Sherbrooke.

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[*English*]

NATIONAL SECURITY

EXTENSION OF FREEZE ON RELEASE OF GOUZENKO PAPERS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question to the Prime Minister is supplementary to those posed by my colleagues earlier. The Prime Minister will recall that he froze the release of the Gouzenko documents for another ten years, and by that freezing he made it impossible for my administration to have access to those documents. He will recall that fact.

The Prime Minister will also understand that the normal period for which documents are kept frozen is 30 years. He extended it an extra ten years in the case of the Gouzenko papers. Will the Prime Minister tell the House of Commons why he took the extraordinary step of extending, by another ten years, the freeze on the Gouzenko papers, and will he tell the House of Commons by what legislative authority he took that extraordinary step?