

Oral Questions

Some time ago, the minister implied that RRAP would be extended throughout Canada without consideration for obstacles that could occur at provincial level. Could he say now to the House if he is going to institute that program? Will he also announce it soon?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker. Negotiations are currently going on with each province to extend designations under RRAP, more likely in all rural Canada and in a greater number of Canadian cities. RRAP already applies to almost all rural Canadian territory and, of course, that means we will have to increase considerably the funds available for such a program. That is what we will do and at the same time we will urge those who are responsible for the implementation of that program to serve first families which have lower incomes, second those who live in the oldest houses of the country, and third, they will be asked to give priority to people inhabiting regions already designated under this program.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, does that mean that it will no longer be necessary for a rural area to get the approval of the provincial government, and here I am thinking specially of the province of Quebec, because now the area must be designated by the provincial government? Will that provision disappear, and will that cover the whole area, as the minister just said, without having to get provincial authorization to determine an area?

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, the approval of the provincial authorities will always be needed for designating purposes. Still, in the case which surely interests the hon. member, I can say that our negotiations with the provincial authorities have enabled us to extend designations widely to all rural areas of the province of Quebec.

REQUEST FOR FURTHER FUNDS

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, as this matter is extremely important, and in view of the numerous requests we get in this regard, will the funds be increased considerably to allow approval of a rather large number of requests so that more people can benefit from this program I consider absolutely marvellous? An hon. member of the opposition does not often say things like that!

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, naturally we will increase considerably the funds allotted to each province of Canada for the application of this program. But as we suspect that those funds will not be sufficient to meet the demand, we are therefore recommending that applications from low-income earners be dealt with first, and secondly those of people who live in the oldest houses in the country, and thirdly, those from areas that were first designated. Notwithstanding those three basic recommenda-

tions, obviously we will have to increase, probably double, or even triple, the funds allotted to each province: we hope to be in a position to do so.

● (1427)

[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

MONITORING AGENCY FOR POST-CONTROLS PERIOD

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance. The Prime Minister, in a press conference over the weekend, confirmed that the Economic Council of Canada will be acting as a monitoring agency in the post-control strategy of the government after the Anti-Inflation Board finishes its mandate. He also confirmed that the agency will not have any authority to inquire into or act upon specific wage and price increases.

I would like to ask the minister, in light of the paradox that this proposes for an agency which will be acting *post facto*—in other words, before it can report to the government, it will have to identify wage and price increases in a specific sector or company—what agency does the government intend to use to act on such wage or price increases that have been so identified by the ECC, in view of the fact there will be no legislative authority after the AIB mandate finishes on April 15?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we have said that after April 14 we are going back to the market-place and we do not intend to have legislation that will give power to the government to roll back either wages or price increases.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, could the minister explain to the House why the Economic Council of Canada has not been given the legislative authority to examine or investigate areas of potential wage and price increases that would go beyond the guidelines? In other words, the only role they will have will be to analyse statistics which are already in the public domain, the statistics from Statistics Canada, a role which the cabinet itself could carry out. I ask the minister why the Economic Council has not been given the legislative authority that the Food and Prices Review Board had, to inquire into and open up the books in areas where the guidelines have been exceeded.

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, we have decided that after April 14 we will not have controls. The hon. member is trying to find a way to keep controls. Members of the opposition should make up their minds. They have been asking us to remove controls for the past two years.

Mr. McGrath: What the minister is telling the House and the country is that the government, in fact, has no post-control strategy. That is the situation facing us today. I ask the minister to tell the House what authority or what method of operation the government has in mind once a problem area has been identified by the ECC as going beyond the guidelines.