

Oral Questions

when they return to me with their report, on which to base my instructions to them.

[English]

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**REASON FOR DIFFERENCE IN PRICE FARMER RECEIVES FOR BEEF AND COST TO CONSUMER**

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. Obviously, the Minister of Finance was pleased with the 9 per cent inflation rate. I should like to ask the Acting Prime Minister a question about that. The Canadian price index indicated that the price of beef in this country went up by 33 per cent last year. Meanwhile, the producer price has increased by 19 per cent over that of last year. A 1,000 pound steer brought the farmer an extra \$80, and the consumer paid an extra \$180 for the same steer. I should like to ask the Acting Prime Minister, or the Minister of Finance for that matter, if they can explain the gap. Why is there a \$100 gap between the farm and the table? What will be done about it?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, of course, with regard to costs being passed on to the consumers, controls played their part for two years and a half. I know full well the hon. member represents a party which wants us to lift controls, and feels we should never have had them. But part of the market cannot be controlled while the other is not. I believe that some companies dealing in the consumer goods sector were forced repeatedly to return some of their profits to the consumers; however, the NDP saw fit not to take that into account.

[English]

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, obviously, controls did not work here. The farmer received an extra 19 per cent for the steer, but the consumer was paying an extra 33 per cent. Why is there such a spread? What will the minister do about it?

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, obviously the distributing and marketing companies exaggerated in that field; come the end of the year, when the AIB reviews their profits, they will of course hand over their excess profits to the consumers.

[English]

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture said that if we needed it in this country, he would bring in an act to set up a meat trade authority. I should like to ask the Acting Prime Minister whether we can expect to see such a bill before the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I am taking note of the question and shall convey its contents to the Minister of Agriculture whose responsibility this is.

[Mr. Danson.]

FINANCE**REQUEST PREMIERS RECEIVE CANADA'S PROPOSALS AT GATT NEGOTIATIONS**

Mr. Bill Kempling (Halton-Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Since the economy of every province is profoundly affected by the Gatt negotiations, will the government accept the request of the premiers and forward to them, on a confidential basis, the negotiating list Canada is presenting at Geneva?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this matter was discussed this morning at the first ministers' conference. The Prime Minister agreed that, on a confidential basis, information would be transmitted to the various premiers for the tariffs which affect their provinces.

Mr. Kempling: Mr. Speaker, this information will be transmitted to the premiers: will it be on a piecemeal basis? In other words, are we going to let one provincial premier know what is going on in his province, or are we going to let all the premiers know what is going on in all of Canada?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I think there was general discussion and agreement among the premiers this morning that the responsibility of those negotiations is the responsibility of the federal government. There was an agreement that there should be exchange of information between the provinces and the federal government. I think that is the proper course to follow.

INFORMATION ON GATT PROPOSALS AVAILABLE TO PREMIERS

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Is he telling the House of Commons that the government intends immediately, today or tomorrow, to make available to the premiers of Canada all, or a part of the GATT negotiating list which Canadian officials are presenting at Geneva? Is that what he is telling us, or is he telling us that information will be made available to the premiers at a later time, which is quite a different position?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, several consultations have already been held between the provinces and the federal government on the subjects discussed. Of course, the question put to the Prime Minister this morning dealt with whether or not the provincial first ministers would be advised of the American position. The Prime Minister of Canada said that he was thinking of conveying part of that information to the first ministers concerned.

[English]

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Finance would want to reconfirm what went on at the federal-provincial conference this morning, because that is not what happened. I would like to know from the Minister of Finance—or