

Oral Questions

ENERGY

CANADIAN CRUDE OIL—POSSIBILITY OF EXTENSION OF
PRICE FREEZE BEYOND APRIL 1, 1974

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): May I ask the Prime Minister whether it is now the intention or within the contemplation of the government to extend the freeze on Canadian crude oil beyond April 1, although it was indicated at the energy conference that the freeze would come off on April 1 and the Prime Minister said, I believe, that what he called a reasonable price increase would take place? Is it now contemplated that the freeze will be extended?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition is talking about continuation of the present freeze, the answer is no. There is no contemplation of that being continued past April 1; but, of course, it is in the government's plans to ensure that there will be a freeze in the sense that there will be a lower price in Canada than the world price. In that sense we are going to ask for the co-operation of the provinces, the industry and, hopefully, of the opposition parties in supporting the government so that Canadians will pay a lower price than the world price.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS

PROPOSED INCREASE IN PRICE OF BREAD—POSITION OF
GOVERNMENT

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, in the area of the cost of living I want to ask the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs whether he is contemplating any action to make certain that the increase of four cents in the price of a loaf of bread proposed by the Bakery Council will not take place in view of the recommendation of the Food Prices Review Board that the increase ought to be no more than two cents per loaf?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think that the government's position with respect to unjustifiable food price increases has been confirmed in the recent Speech from the Throne. The Food Prices Review Board is, I understand, currently reviewing the situation in order to come up with a final report on the implications of what has been proposed by the industry. We will certainly be prepared to assume our responsibilities once this information is available to us.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, no one can help but be struck by the minister's commitment.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: I would ask the minister exactly how he proposes to assume his responsibility in view of the fact he has refused to produce to Parliament legislation that would give either the board or him authority to roll back an unjustifiable price increase?

[Mr. Stanfield.]

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated our commitment in the past to deal with these kinds of matters and we will be prepared to do so again.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is much use pursuing this particular minister.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

DISCUSSIONS WITH PROVINCES ON PREVENTION OF
INCREASE IN PRICE OF MILK

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I want to pose a question to the Minister of Agriculture arising out of reports that there may be an increase in the price of milk. In view of the discussions the minister has had and the agreements he has reached with the agencies of a number of the provinces, may I ask whether there have been any further discussions with regard to the subsidy or any form of action by the government to avoid an increase in the price to the consumer of milk, a product so essential to the health of Canadians, particularly children?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, we have had consultations with several of the provinces. Several provinces have stated they are desirous of increasing the price of milk because of increased input costs. According to the agreement we signed with them, if they can prove to us they require increased prices because their costs have gone up and the increased cost of input to them varies from 5 to 10 per cent, we immediately open negotiations with them. We have allowed the province of Quebec—I believe it is the only one—a two cent a quart raise in their price, but the federal subsidy of five cents a quart still stays in position.

[Translation]

RISING COST OF LIVING—SUBSIDIZATION OF CONSUMERS

Mr. Gilles Caouette (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a question to the right hon. Prime Minister.

In view of the staggering rise in the cost of living, specially that of food, does he plan to subsidize consumers in order to make up for the erosion of the purchasing power of Canadians and so give them access to Canadian production?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): If the hon. member is alluding to the subsidies granted in specific cases, the answer, Mr. Speaker, is obvious since the government has already acted and will continue to act to that effect as long as it is deemed necessary. If, on the other hand, the hon. member means general subsidies to be granted all consumers for all sorts of reasons, then the answer is no.

[English]

PROPOSED INCREASE IN PRICE OF BREAD—POSITION OF
MINISTER

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Has the minister discussed with the chairman of the Food Prices Review Board the question of the