

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Paproski: Lumley and Axworthy didn't applaud.

Mr. Trudeau: Only two? I think it is important to set the record straight. When the hon. member says I imposed wage and price controls unilaterally, that of course is not the way it happened. He will recall that in the summers of 1974 and 1975 the ten premiers had assembled. They lamented the inflationary state of the economy and begged the federal government to take action. The action we took was only possible because it was judged by common opinion in Canada, notably that of the premiers, that we were in a crisis situation. The hon. member knows enough about the Constitution to know that we cannot control wages and prices nationally unless there is a crisis. That crisis, as it was defined by the courts, was accepted as a crisis because the provinces had, generally speaking, supported our action. Indeed, they co-operated with the federal government in applying wage and price controls. So much for the record.

I want to point out to the hon. member that the objective of our proposal yesterday was to show collective leadership in Canada, hoping that the ten premiers and the federal government would take some action collectively to come to grips with the danger of a wage explosion, and to do it in such a way that we would not penalize those at the low end of the wage scale, since we offered that they would have compensation in line with the increase in the cost of living, but those at the top end, those who, I believe, have caused some complaint in the House, would be absolutely frozen. We were hoping at this time of economic leadership that we would also have the support of the opposition parties, since it would have the effect of tackling the cause of our economic malaise. It would have the effect of—

Mr. Nielsen: How about the length of the answers?

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. member for Yukon is distressed with the length of the answers. He would prefer the histrionic shouting of his leader, I guess, when it comes to having exchanges in the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: My answers are answers to questions. The histrionics of his leader are speeches that should not be made during the question period.

QUERY RESPECTING PROFIT AND INTEREST CONTROLS

Mr. Mark Rose (Mission-Port Moody): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister's response was notable for its omissions. I would point out that he did not reject the unilateral imposition of wage controls on federal public servants. I would also point out, as he implied that wages were the cause of inflation, that workers' wages have fallen behind inflation for four years in a row. So much for that argument.

Oral Questions

Since the Minister of Finance talked about a principle of equity in his budget, can the Prime Minister explain where is the fairness in the concept of imposing wage controls on public servants but no price control or excess profit controls on the banks, or any corresponding controls on interest rates which are killing the home owners of this country?

• (1150)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is right, of course. I did not answer his question about controlling the federal public service. I was told by members opposite that my answers were too long, and that is why I interrupted my answer.

If the House will hear me out, I would like to deal with that question. It is not the intention of the federal government—that is the reassurance the hon. member is asking for—to freeze or impose wage controls on its public service. The intention for which we asked the co-operation of the provinces was to give a collective sign that we wanted to keep the wage pressures down.

Now, the reason we, as the federal government, talked about that aspect was that it had been raised by three premiers in their opening statements. I repeat to the hon. member, that is why my setting the record straight was important, that in normal circumstances we do not have jurisdiction over the control of prices, wages and profits. That is under provincial jurisdiction. That is the law of contract that comes under Section 92, property and civil rights. We do not have that jurisdiction.

The only way that prices and profits could be controlled, and I pointed this out to the Premier of Saskatchewan who raised the same objection as the hon. member, is if he would decide in his province to keep prices and profits down. He is not doing it in areas of his jurisdiction, nor is the Premier of Manitoba. They are both socialist premiers and they seem to disagree with the approach suggested by the hon. member. They are more apt, as are members on the opposite side of the House, to blame the federal government because it is not doing something about interest rates. However, they are not prepared to undertake the control of the cause of inflation in their own provinces. That is the point I want to make.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

* * *

NUCLEAR ENERGY

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In recent months it has been clear that decisions have been made by cabinet which would indicate the government's nuclear policy and its position as far as the Candu system is concerned. There have been decisions such as the agreement on uranium with Europe, the Mexican tender, and the dia-