

TRANSPORT

CONVENING OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley-Hants): Madam Speaker, my question is for the hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi, who is the chairman of the Standing Committee on Transport. I am directing my question to him, which I can under the rules, to try to circumvent the executive atmosphere we have and the arbitrary order in council that puts us in this quandary whereby hon. members do not have an opportunity to discuss and debate, and to try to find out the reason and the explanation for the costing order.

Can the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Transport inform The House on the status of convening the transport committee as of tomorrow and all next week, even in view of this November 15 deadline, so that all members on all sides of the House can examine the presidents of the two railways and the president of VIA Rail, and so that competent officials from the CTC can attend to explain the costing order and how it compares with the Amtrak order and the costing order of European Rail, which has 11 different railways feeding into it—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would like to have a question, and I would like it to be as brief as possible.

Mr. Nowlan: Madam Speaker, can the chairman inform this House on the status of earlier discussions to convene the committee? Does the hon. member not think it would be a positive step to widen the terms of reference of the committee to include the Atlantic coast and British Columbia, rather than having only Ontario and Quebec?

[Translation]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, members have already had an opportunity to discuss the matter at least twice. The first time was on an opposition day, when the first motion was introduced by the opposition; the last or second time was last Monday, during the debate on a motion for concurrence in a committee report. Members opposite have four opposition days left to discuss the matter again, if they wish. In addition, the Minister of Transport has announced that he was available to appear before another committee in order to provide clarification.

So there have been and there will be plenty of opportunities to discuss this matter, thanks to the flexible attitude of the Minister of Transport and the government. The hon. member's request is therefore unnecessary.

[English]

PARTICIPATION BY MEMBERS IN CONSIDERATION OF DECISION

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley-Hants): Madam Speaker, my question was directed to the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Transport. It did not involve the government House leader, who undoubtedly has torpedoed the recommendation that the Chair—

Oral Questions

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The President of the Privy Council is authorized to answer questions if he so chooses on questions of that nature.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Andre: Nonsense.

Mr. Nowlan: Could either the Chairman of the Standing Committee or the President of the Privy Council please explain to this House, under this red herring of four more allotted days, that unless the standing committee meets tomorrow and all of next week, the four allotted days, cannot be used until after November 15 thereby eliminating any participation by members on all sides on this very arbitrary decision?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, in fact it was my intention to designate next Monday as an opposition day and I wanted to discuss this with my fellow House leaders later this afternoon.

In the circumstances, before November 15 there will be at least one more opportunity for debate. In all probability, next Monday will be an opposition day.

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● (1425)

[English]

THE ECONOMY

SPEECH MADE BY DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF BANK OF CANADA

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday the Conference Board pointed out that consumer confidence in the Canadian economy is at a 20-year low directly attributable to a high interest rate policy. Yesterday the Minister of Agriculture complained about the banks' high interest rates, yet yesterday in London a deputy governor of the Bank of Canada said high interest rates are going to remain in Canada. My question to the minister is straightforward. Will he now guarantee us a low interest rate policy, and will he tell us who is running Canada, the Government of Canada or the Bank of Canada?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the hon. member realizes as well as I do that the way to get interest rates down in this country is to get the rate of inflation down. The hon. member and I could have a number of debates about the variation in interest rates between Canada and the United States, or on how much savers ought to receive for their savings in the form of interest payments, presumably some amount above the rate of inflation. We can have our debate on that and we can have differences of opinion, but I hope my