

*Oral Questions*

pension review committee of which the hon. member is a member.

We asked that committee—and I hope it will do so—to deal with both private and public pensions together, so for the first time this country will have an integrated approach to pensions and it will not be ad hoc as it was in the past.

**Miss Bégin:** Mr. Speaker, may I say, by way of a supplementary, that the answer of the minister is kind of cute but he is daydreaming; he thinks he has invented the world.

[*Translation*]

On the French channel, there is a program called "Parle, parle, jase, jase". I am sure the minister could find a job on this program without the least difficulty. Now, my question is a simple one. Everybody has received a copy of the report, and I am directing my question to the present government which is supposed to have been leading this country for the past six months. Did the minister consult the provincial ministers of welfare when he met with them in Toronto on November 13, if my memory is serving me right, about the pensions plans in the private sector and the Canada Pension Plan; has he asked this issue to be placed on the agenda and, if not, what is he waiting for?

[*English*]

**Mr. Crombie:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before—and I am sure most hon. members would agree—the problem of those people who are between the ages of 55 and 64 and, indeed, those over the age of 65 who are below the poverty line, is not one that was created in the last six months. Everyone understands that it is absolutely essential that we get on with the matter and that we deal with both public and private pensions together. Otherwise, people simply get whipsawed. That is why we are approaching the matter this way.

With respect to whether or not it will be on the agenda of the federal-provincial ministers conference in January, my answer is yes, it will be.

[*Translation*]

**Miss Bégin:** We now know that the minister will put this question on the agenda. My third question is for the Minister of Finance, but in his absence I will put it to the President of the Treasury Board.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, is the President of the Treasury Board, now that the Minister of National Health and Welfare pledged yesterday in Toronto help against inflation for pensioners, ready to move amendments to the law? He does not need any committee to do that; he just has to consult the work already done in his department. He just has to move amendments to the Pension Benefits Standards Act to preserve the real value of private pensions in the face of inflation. Will he do so?

● (1420)

**Hon. Sinclair Stevens (President of Treasury Board):** Mr. Speaker, the question to which the hon. member has referred,

[*Mr. Crombie.*]

of course, has been of great concern to this government. It is presently under review, and in due course we will be making a suitable announcement.

## IMPROVED PENSIONS FOR OLDER AND UNATTACHED WOMEN

**Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent):** Mr. Speaker, now that the minister has recognized there is a problem in particular for older and unattached women, will he not subject them to another study but, in fact, convince his colleagues in the inner cabinet—to put their priorities where they should be and to move immediately to help this group, instead of helping the group which is being assisted by the tax credit plan of the Minister of Finance?

**Hon. David Crombie (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the hon. member is aware, the request and, indeed, the requirement for the pension review by the standing committee was made by the Prime Minister in the Speech from the Throne.

**Miss Bégin:** Which committee?

**Mr. Crombie:** Indeed, it enjoys the support entirely of the government and all caucus members on this side.

**Mr. LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, again we will get reviews and studies. Since the Prime Minister—probably at this very moment—is arguing over, not whether oil prices should or should not be increased but by how much, will the minister say that he will move immediately to help those who will be negatively affected by heating oil price increases and gasoline price increases—consumers, including a lot of poor people? Will he move to improve immediately the level of the guaranteed income supplement for those living under the poverty line?

**Mr. Crombie:** Mr. Speaker, with regard to the first point, already the Prime Minister has spoken positively on that matter. With respect to the GIS, I have indicated that certainly it is a priority of mine. The committee of which the hon. member is a member will be dealing with that matter.

**Miss Bégin:** Which committee?

**Mr. Crombie:** Certainly, I hope that all the interest we now find from the last two questioners will be found with some haste when it comes before the committee, because this problem with respect to people aged 55 and over has been with us for a long time and should have been dealt with before.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. LeBlanc:** Another study.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!