

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Stanfield:** It is very clear the government is not prepared to face up to its responsibility. I again ask the Prime Minister whether in view of the serious increases in the prices of meat, fish and poultry, more than 14 per cent in the course of a year, and taking into account the figures published today showing the current tendency, the government is now prepared to act on an immediate supplementary cost of living payment to old age pensioners, the blind and others receiving such allowances?

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

**Mr. Trudeau:** I take it, Mr. Speaker, that a measure of that applause is directed to the position of the government as it was stated yesterday by the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

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

INCREASE IN FOOD PRICES—DEPARTMENTAL  
INVESTIGATION OF REASONS—PLANS TO DEAL WITH  
PROBLEM

**Mr. David Lewis (York South):** May I follow up this subject, Mr. Speaker, and direct my questions to begin with, at least, to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Has his department been watching these increases in food prices, has it made any investigation or inquiry into the reasons for these increases and whether they are justified or whether the supermarkets and others are merely getting what the traffic will bear? I would also ask the hon. gentleman whether his department is engaged in making any plans to deal with this very serious food price situation?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, the department has been watching developments with respect to prices. The basic jurisdiction of the department is under the Combines Investigation Act and, as I have pointed out to the House, the practice under succeeding governments has been not to indicate the existence of any inquiry under it unless such an inquiry is terminated, unless the matter is referred to the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission or unless some court proceedings are undertaken. So far as plans are concerned, I would refer the hon. member to the answer given by the Prime Minister a few moments ago.

INCREASE IN FOOD PRICES—SUGGESTED FREEZE  
PENDING REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE

**Mr. David Lewis (York South):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could direct my next question to the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that any parliamentary committee or any other body investigating this matter is faced with a time period before any report is produced, let alone any action is taken, and in view of the very serious situation created by the increase in the price of foods, particularly for low income families, would the Prime Minister not seriously consider placing a freeze on the price of food and at the same time providing some support to the farmers who might be hurt by a freeze on the price of food—

[Mr. Hees.]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member will recognize that this is a rather long question. Questions should be stated as briefly as possible. Perhaps the minister or the Prime Minister might reply.

**Mr. Lewis:** I do not know whether the Prime Minister heard my last words—a freeze on the price of food pending the committee's deliberations and report.

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the suggestion by the Leader of the New Democratic Party is not a very simple one. He wants to freeze prices on the one hand and subsidize farmers on the other. I would suggest that if his suggestion has merit it should be brought before the committee which has been instructed to recommend action and which can recommend action on an interim basis. It does not have to wait for a final report. If the suggestion has, indeed, any merit at all, I am sure this will be recognized immediately by all the hon. member's colleagues on the committee and the government would then be prepared to consider immediate action.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for York South for a supplementary followed by a further supplementary question from the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi.

INCREASE IN FOOD PRICES—SUGGESTED INCLUSION OF  
ACTION TO CONTROL ON AGENDA OF FINANCE  
MINISTERS' MEETING

**Mr. David Lewis (York South):** Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister of Finance a question in the same area based on my understanding that the Minister of Finance is meeting the provincial Ministers of Finance on the 18th of this month, I believe. Would the minister consider placing on the agenda of that meeting an item specifying the necessity of taking some action with regard to the control of food prices in this country, since it has been forecast that they will continue to go up, in order that the federal and provincial governments may collaborate in imposing necessary selective controls on food prices?

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, there is an item on the agenda relating to the general economic situation which is wide enough for that subject to be discussed. I rather doubt that a consensus could be obtained from the provinces on that subject since most of the provincial governments have pronounced themselves against that particular proposition.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION—SUGGESTED EARLY  
INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO DEAL WITH  
PROBLEMS

**Mr. Heward Graffey (Brome-Missisquoi):** Mr. Speaker, because of the urgency accorded economic matters in the throne speech and because of the two announcements on inflation and unemployment this week, can the Prime Minister tell the House whether the government has drafted legislative measures to deal with unemployment and inflation so that the House can deal with these matters first thing next week—in fact, now?