

Oral Questions

in a different way; if not, I will recognize the hon. member for St. John's East who also has a supplementary.

Mr. Grier: Mr. Speaker, I shall try to approach the question in a manner that will be in order. In view of the fact that a number of the bakers who are responsible for the price increases are not members of the Bakery Council, what steps did the minister take to contact those bakers in pursuit of some assurance that they would not take this action?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, if I am not mistaken, it was the announcement of the Bakery Council on February 15 on behalf of its members that they were planning to make increases in their prices of three to four cents, with a minimum of four cents in Quebec, that led the Food Prices Review Board to intensify its studies of this matter and issue the two reports of which we are aware. The reports were in response, as I understand it, to the announcement of the Bakery Council. I thought that the most urgent thing to do was to be in touch with the Bakery Council with respect to the intention of its members, and now that we have additional information I am proceeding actively to deal with this other aspect of the situation as well.

Mr. Grier: Mr. Speaker, the minister could have anticipated the problem he has described. In view of the fact that Weston Bakeries announced yesterday it was increasing its price by four cents and it is a member of the Bakery Council and is taking this action in defiance of the council, the Food Prices Review Board, the government and the Canadian consumer, what steps is the government taking to empower itself to enforce a roll-back of that specific price increase which has been announced and confirmed by that bakery?

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, the approach outlined by the Prime Minister on behalf of the government contemplates decisions on action after there have been hearings by the board on its report and observation of whether there is voluntary action once these hearings have taken place. In the meantime I propose to contact Weston's directly to see exactly what they are doing and what they plan to do.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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[Translation]

POST OFFICE**SALARY INCREASE FOR RURAL MAIL CARRIERS**

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Has the hon. member for Portneuf a supplementary question?

Mr. Roland Godin (Portneuf): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I recognize the hon. member for Portneuf, and we then return to supplementary questions on this matter.

Mr. Godin: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Postmaster General.

[Mr. Speaker.]

As the minister announced to us last December that the department was preparing an analysis of the contracts of rural mail carriers in order to adjust further the salaries of these workers to the cost of living, could we know how far this analysis has gone and what increase percentage can be expected by this category of postal workers?

Hon. André Ouellet (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, after many requests from members on this side of the House and some from the other side, we have reviewed all contracts for rural mail distribution to adjust them in accordance with the rise in the cost of living registered during the last few years, in brief, to make them more equitable.

We have also announced that, due to the price increase of a gallon of gas, an increase will be granted to all rural mail carriers.

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[English]

CONSUMER AFFAIRS**INTENTION OF GOVERNMENT RESPECTING INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO CONTROL PRICE OF BREAD**

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the fact the Food Prices Review Board reported on February 18 that an increase of more than two cents on a 24 ounce loaf of bread could not be justified, and in view of the Prime Minister's statement to the country last September that he would take action if the bakeries failed to respond in a voluntary way and proceeded with any unwarranted increase, does the Prime Minister now propose to accept this challenge thrown to him by the bakeries and bring in legislation? Otherwise his statement is empty rhetoric and the Food Prices Review Board is a farce.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

POSITION OF GOVERNMENT RESPECTING FOUR CENT INCREASE IN PRICE OF BREAD

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary on the bread situation. In view of the fact there has been an announcement of a four cent increase in the price of bread, and in view of the fact the Food Prices Review Board has said it is unjustified, the minister has said it is unjustified and the Prime Minister has said it is unjustified, I put this question to the minister. Is he going to back down as he has in the past on this matter or does he still feel—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to the hon. member that such questions are not questions; they are debate. Would the hon. member resume his seat. He will be given an opportunity to rephrase his question if he wants to. After that we will go to the next question and I will recognize the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby.

Mr. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we are entitled to ask the minister—

Some hon. Members: Question!