

citizens, particularly the needy ones, and chooses between a whole set of priorities which are constantly before the government, some of which even met with the approval of the opposition last spring. We are constantly making these assessments and obviously trying to spend as little money as possible as we are not interested in raising taxes unless we have to.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, has the Prime Minister issued any specific instructions or guidelines to his ministers directing them to institute any restraint or discipline in respect of the operations of their departments?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, quite frequently, Mr. Speaker, and generally I have the strong support of the President of the Treasury Board.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: The old rug ranker again.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, in view of the growth in the Public Service by nearly 25 per cent over the last two years and the growth in the use and cost of outside consultants from about \$300 million when the right hon. gentleman took office to nearly \$800 million next year, is there any explanation for this, particularly in view of the accepted fact that it is the poor who pay a bigger proportion of their income in taxes than any other group in our society, so this expansion in Public Service expenditures is really on the backs of the poor?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the concern for the poor shown by the Leader of the Opposition is a concern shared by all of us. That is why in the last budget the Minister of Finance brought in tax reductions which were particularly helpful to the poor.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS

EXTENT TO WHICH CEMENT PRICES ARTIFICIALLY INCREASED BY REASON OF CONSPIRACY BY B.C. SUPPLIERS—STEPS TO RECOVER LOSSES SUFFERED BY PUBLIC

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce in the absence of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In view of the fact that seven major suppliers of cement in the province of British Columbia have pleaded guilty under the Combines Investigation Act to conspiring to cut competition in that industry over a 14-year period, and in view of the fact that those companies control some 90 per cent of the cement market, would the minister advise whether any investigation has been completed or conducted as to the extent by which cement prices were artificially increased as a result of this conspiracy?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take notice of that question and refer it to my colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Oral Questions

Mr. Leggatt: Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my supplementary question to the Minister of Public Works, to whom I have given some notice. In view of the fact that over this 14-year period of conspiracy in the cement industry in British Columbia the federal government was involved in the construction of the Vancouver International Airport, the CBC building, the Van-Term cargo terminal amounting to some \$22 million, and many other major federal projects, would the minister advise the House what steps the government intends to take to recover the loss the public has suffered as a result of this conspiracy?

Hon. Jean-Eudes Dubé (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. member does acknowledge the building construction that goes on in his province by my department. However, I am not aware of any conspiracy and I do not recall having received any notice from the hon. member on that topic.

Mr. Leggatt: Mr. Speaker, in view of the last answer my further supplementary will be redirected to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. In view of this type of case where the public obviously has been overcharged in respect of major projects, and in view of the obvious failure on the part of the government to control this kind of thing, will the minister consider introducing legislation of a class action type so the public can protect itself when the government fails to do so?

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, I think the particular abuses the hon. member has alleged or referred to are covered by the laws of this country as passed by the House.

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

DAIRYING—INQUIRY AS TO ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW POLICY

Mr. Jean-Marie Boisvert (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the Minister of Agriculture.

Last week, in his answer to one of the questions I had a chance to ask in this House, the minister's parliamentary secretary declared that the minister would announce a new policy for the dairy industry a few days after. I would first like to know whether this policy will be made public today or tomorrow, since it was declared it would be announced soon.

[English]

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, by law it has to be announced before April 1 or by that date, and it will be.

THREAT OF GRASSHOPPER INFESTATION IN SASKATCHEWAN THIS SPRING—GOVERNMENT PLANS FOR CONTROL

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. In view of the potential threat of a severe grasshopper infestation of a large area of Saskatchewan this coming spring, and in view of the fact that if there is a large hatch it will severely reduce grain production in the area, will the minister advise what plans