

Oral Questions

energy policy. The minister's reply was: "Late winter, Mr. Speaker." I can give the Prime Minister six other references to show that the minister has given the same type of answer to the same question at different times. I want to ask the Prime Minister whether this change in recent weeks, this reference to energy studies being tabled rather than a statement on national energy policy being made, is the result of the cabinet meeting on April 12 when apparently it was decided to postpone the whole matter of making a declarative statement on national policy until 1974?

Mr. Trudeau: When the hon. member gives me the six other references to which he referred—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: —I will give him as many references to very clear statements by the minister that this present series of papers will be a presentation of facts. It goes back well before the date in April which the hon. member mentioned.

Mr. Douglas: In view of the fact the minister has repeatedly made definite commitments to bring down in late winter or this spring a clear and definitive statement regarding the government's national energy policy, may I ask the Prime Minister why this commitment has not been kept? Will he also tell the House when it will be kept, and when we may expect the statement on national energy policy which we have been awaiting for the past four years?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: No policy.

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TRANSPORT

FREIGHT RATES—STATEMENT BY MINISTER RESPECTING
DISCUSSION OF ADJUSTMENT WITH RAILWAYS—
RELATION TO WESTERN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES
CONFERENCE

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister arising out of the fact that both in the House and outside it the Minister of Transport stated yesterday that he intends to discuss with the railways the question of adjusting some freight rates to which he referred as anomalies. I want to ask the Prime Minister whether the Minister of Transport was stating government policy, and whether it is the intention of the government that such discussions with the railways take place before the western economic policy conference.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Some such discussions have already taken place, as I understand it, and have indeed taken place with the various provinces. As to the date of any announcement of policy in this connection, I cannot inform the House. It may be before the western economic opportunities conference or it may be at that time.

• (1420)

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, in view of the Prime Minister's answer I would ask him to make clear to the House whether these discussions with the railways at this time, if they have already taken place, are a substitute for discussion of the whole question of freight rates and transportation at the economic opportunities conference?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I would not say they were substitutes; they are part of the over-all review of transportation policy upon which the government is engaged.

CROWNSNEST FREIGHT RATES—POSSIBILITY OF
DISCUSSION AT WESTERN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES
CONFERENCE

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Prime Minister another question arising out of a statement made by another minister, namely, the Minister of Justice in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board, in Winnipeg last Friday. During his speech the minister said, as has already been drawn to the attention of the House, that the whole Crowsnest rate structure might come under review. May I ask the Prime Minister whether this is government policy and is it the intention of the government to place a review of the Crowsnest rate structure before the conference next month in view of the fact that if a review takes place it can only be to increase the Crowsnest rates because it cannot possibly reduce them?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the latter part of the question, the hon. member will have to wait to see what our policy position is. With regard to the general question, whether we are reviewing every aspect of transportation, the answer is yes. We are attempting to review every aspect of transportation in so far as we have time and to make a thorough assessment of all aspects of these problems.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will recognize the right hon. member for Prince Albert on a supplementary and then the hon. member for Témiscamingue.

CROWNSNEST FREIGHT RATES—INTENTION OF
GOVERNMENT RESPECTING ALTERATION

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I would direct my question to the Minister of Transport. Is it a fact that consideration is being given today by the government to altering the Magna Carta that protects western farmers and agriculture by bringing about changes in the Crowsnest pass rates? This is a very, very serious step and one which will be widely condemned in western Canada.

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I do not think it was ever the intention of the Minister of Transport and the Department of Transport to review this agreement. Of course, if in the west some suggestions are made about it we are ready to look into the matter.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, if there has been no discussion of this subject, would the minister bring the