

Oral Questions

grants which enabled the government to buy the silence of groups opposed to its policies?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member will recognize that a question asked in those terms is entirely out of order.

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PUBLIC SERVICE

ALLEGED RUG-RANKING SYSTEM OF PROMOTING SECRETARIES—REQUEST FOR SUBSTITUTION OF POINT RATING SYSTEM AND TABLING OF RELATIVE TREASURY BOARD MINUTES

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the President of the Treasury Board. The priority recommendation of the public service secretaries' brief was for the replacement of the rug-ranking system by a system which would provide for promotion by way of merit for secretaries. In light of the fact that other professional groups and clerks in the public service were granted such a system more than a decade ago, is the government now going to replace the rug-ranking system with a point rating system for secretaries and if so, will a statement be made this week?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I think perhaps the hon. gentleman is not aware that the same system of classification and rating is applied to secretaries as is applied to all other appointments in the public service. The difficulty, of course, is that there tends to be a highly personal relationship between a secretary and his or her employer—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Not on this side.

Mr. Drury:—and a tendency to regard the employer rather than the office as being the important factor.

Mr. Baker: A supplementary. In light of that impressive defence of the status quo, would the minister indicate whether the rug-ranking system has been a matter for Cabinet discussion and whether alternatives have been formally considered during the five years he has been President of the Treasury Board? Also, would the minister be prepared to table Treasury Board minutes in this House with respect to discussions and studies that have gone on in connection with this distressing matter?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have doubts about the first part of the hon. member's supplementary but perhaps the hon. minister might reply to the last part.

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, I did not quite hear your comment. I would say that Treasury Board minutes are not published and the agenda of cabinet is not published.

Mr. Baldwin: Only leaked.

Mr. Drury: I would also hope that my colleagues in Cabinet would not be in the habit of discussing slogans.

[Mr. Bawden.]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

POSSIBLE INCREASE IN PRICE OF BREAD—REQUEST FOR ALTERATION IN METHOD OF PAYING SUBSIDY TO WHEAT FARMERS TO HELP CONSUMERS

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. It has to do with the reduction in the subsidy to grain farmers to \$60 million. In the result it is generally estimated that the cost of a loaf of bread will increase by between one cent and three cents or even four cents. As this \$60 million to be paid from year to year is actually the amount that was paid by my administration for acreage payments, on the two occasions when that payment was made, would the Prime Minister, in order to assist in keeping down the cost of living, alter the method of payment, to the end that the consumers of Canada would not have added to the already overwhelming load of the cost of living the additional price they must pay for bread?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the right hon. gentleman wants to ascertain for himself the mathematics, I am sure he will find that the government is subsidizing the consumer of bread to the tune of \$60 million a year. What relationship that has to the acreage payment under his administration is something that he can determine better than I can. Whether or not that was a subsidy to the consumer or the farmer, in this case it is obviously a subsidy to the consumer of \$60 million a year. The mathematics of it would indicate to the right hon. member that this might result in an increase in the price of bread of one tenth of one cent, certainly a far cry from the four or five cents that he mentioned.

An hon. Member: He did not mention five cents.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The Prime Minister apparently did not read the press when he was on the western tour for the purpose of ascertaining the feelings of the people. I ask him again, why should the consumer of Canada, at the time we have the highest cost of living in history, be loaded with a further addition to the cost of one of the staples, bread, because of the action of this government?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure of the relevance of reading newspapers on my tour of the west, but I would want to think that over and perhaps I might find intelligence in the comment. On the point of the subsidy, the right hon. gentleman should realize that if we were to increase the subsidy to something above \$60 million per year, it would mean an increase in taxes, and I am not sure that this is what the right hon. gentleman would support.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister walked around in a circle in that answer. I simply ask him this: now that he is about to approach the west to find out what western Canada wants, is he not prepared to do something along the lines suggested, so that the consumer of Canada will not be loaded down still further by the failure of this government to contain the rise in the cost of living?