

Oral Questions

two days ago in this House when he indicated that he had met with the chartered banks.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: I understand that the Leader of the New Democratic Party does not like the Minister of Finance meeting with bankers, but that is part of his job.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, economics may be a dismal science, but we surely have a dismal Prime Minister when we get answers like that today on such an important subject. The Prime Minister knows that the Minister of Finance did not bring a specific proposal away from the bankers. If he does not know that, the people of Canada do.

EFFECT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister took pride a couple of weeks ago in saying to me that as a Liberal he believed in gradualism. Considering that for three years in a row Canadian living standards have gone gradually down, and considering that for five months in a row prices have gone gradually up beyond 12 per cent each month, will the Prime Minister confirm that gradualism for the Liberals really means a gradual decline in the living standard of every Canadian from coast to coast?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, when I answered that question about two weeks ago and showed the Leader of the New Democratic Party, with statistics, that Canadians are better off today than they were ten years ago, the Leader of the New Democratic Party said, "Of course they are, but that is not my point". I do not know what point he wants to make when he says Canadians are worse off. When we indicate with statistics that they are better off, he says, "Of course; I am not denying that". I wish he would make up his mind on what he wants to complain about.

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ECONOMIC COUNCIL OF CANADA

REPORT ON REGULATIONS

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The Economic Council of Canada has just completed a report on regulations which cost \$3 million and which was done at the Prime Minister's direction and at the urging of the provinces. The council was asked to assess government regulations in Canada. The report suggests that Canadian consumers could save billions of dollars a year in trucking, airline and food costs if the council were listened to. The council found that direct economic controls have resulted in what it says is a substantial waste of economic resources.

This study has taken three years to do. It has cost \$3 million. It was done at the direction of the Prime Minister. The Economic Council of Canada reports to the Prime Minis-

ter. Would the Prime Minister tell the House what action the government plans in following up on this three-year study? Will the government report to this House what recommendations it accepts and what recommendations it rejects, and why it accepts or rejects these recommendations which cost so much to bring forward to the House?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the thrust of the report of the Economic Council is one which the government has been concerned about these past few years and which caused us to set up the task force composed of members of this House, and so ably chaired by the hon. member for Willowdale, which has reported to this House. As a consequence of that report—and, no doubt, in studying further the report of the Economic Council—the government will continue to accelerate its initiatives in order to do away with or to simplify regulations which can be done away with or simplified. In cases of overlap with provincial regulations, we will continue to put an end to such overlap.

The hon. member might want to know that the government has established the office of co-ordinator for regulatory reform under my excellent colleague, the President of the Treasury Board. Of course, when we created the office of controller general, the controller general initiated a program of evaluation which will lead to some substantial improvement in this area.

REQUEST FOR POLICY STATEMENT

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. The report of the House of Commons committee on regulations was filed here on December 19. Very little has been done about it. One of the committee's main recommendations was that there should be a special committee of this House on regulations set up on a permanent basis. Nothing has been done about that. As part of my question I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether he is going to accept that recommendation which was put in by that special committee.

After a three-year study, the Economic Council of Canada has reported to Canadians that billions of dollars can be saved by de-regulation in the transportation field and with respect to food costs and the like. This is a very serious conclusion, and the people of Canada are entitled to know if it is so. If it is so, will the government do it? Is the Prime Minister taking this report of his council seriously? Will he report to the House in the next week or so on what recommendations the government accepts and sees merit in, and what recommendations it does not accept?

For example, the Minister of Agriculture certainly does not accept aspects of the report. Will the government treat this frankly and honestly and report to us and the Canadian consumer as to what it is going to act on, what it is not going to act on, and just exactly what it is going to do, because this is a very amazing, one would say, and important report?