

Oral Questions

Mr. Trudeau:—together with some moderation—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May we have order, please. I am wondering whether it is the wish of the right hon. member that we revert to motions for the purpose of a statement. I certainly do not want to be unfair. It is always difficult for the Chair to decide whether an answer to a question is so long that it might better be made by way of a statement on motions. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition might be allowed to ask a supplementary which might permit the right hon. Prime Minister to complete his answer.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, there is a perfectly simple way out of this problem. In view of the desire of the Prime Minister to make a speech on the subject, is the government House leader prepared to allocate tomorrow as an opposition day?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition ought to make up his mind. A moment ago he was talking about an Easter recess. Now he is talking about sitting tomorrow.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

INCREASE IN CONSUMER PRICE INDEX—REQUEST FOR
ESTABLISHMENT OF REVIEW BOARD WITH POWER TO ROLL
BACK UNJUSTIFIABLE PRICE INCREASES

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the Prime Minister whether the government has made up its mind regarding early legislation to establish a prices review board, not necessarily limited to food, with power in the board or the government to roll back unjustifiable price increases, many of which are now gouging the Canadian consumer?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker, the government is on record several times as saying it is prepared to introduce such legislation if indeed the previous steps have been taken—that gouging has been established and that the gougers have refused to abide by the advice or enjoiners of the Food Prices Review Board. This remains the position of the government. We would not bring in such legislation needlessly, but if indeed gouging is established by the board and the people responsible for it refuse to redress their ways, we will bring in such legislation.

Mr. Lewis: In view of the fact this approach has obviously failed in the past number of months, in view of the fact that legislation passed by parliament giving authority to the appropriate agency or to the government to roll back prices would in itself have a deterrent effect on those who increase prices unrelated to increases in their cost of production and, finally, in view of the fact we have evidence of the incapacity of the Food Prices Review Board to achieve this purpose, may I ask the Prime Minister wheth-

[Mr. Trudeau.]

er instead of waiting, God only knows for what, he is now prepared to introduce such legislation to prevent this kind of thing continuing to happen?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the commitment is as firm as it can be made. I disagree with the premise of the question about failure. The position of the government has always been that gouging should be established and we would then bring in the legislation. The hon. member will have to point out cases where the enjoiners of the Food Prices Review Board have not produced effects. In those circumstances, we would be prepared to act.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will recognize the hon. member for a second supplementary and will then see the hon. member for Shefford and return to this matter. The hon. member for St. John's East will be recognized at that time.

INCREASE IN CONSUMER PRICE INDEX—POSSIBILITY OF
LEGISLATION TO PROTECT PRIVATE PENSION PLANS
AGAINST FURTHER EROSION

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I direct my supplementary question to the Minister of Finance. Has the government given consideration to the condition of private pension plans which are not subject to indexing in line with the rise in the cost of living and are therefore being eroded very rapidly? Has the government given consideration to legislation by parliament or legislation by parliament in conjunction with the provincial legislatures to protect private pension plans from further erosion as a result of the increased cost of living?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the hon. member's colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, a week or so ago, that is one of the matters seriously under consideration.

● (1450)

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[Translation]

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

APPOINTMENT OF NEW PRESIDENT

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Prime Minister.

Since the president of the CN will be retiring at the end of the month, can the Prime Minister tell us whether the cabinet has made a decision concerning the choice of a new president?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we think that the choice of a successor will be announced in the near future.

Mr. Rondeau: I should like to put a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the Prime Minister tell us whether it can be expected that a French Canadian will be appointed president for the first time in the history of the CN?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the member has made a suggestion with which the government is acquainted and will give it thorough consideration.