

Oral Questions

Speaker, the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is actively studying the whole question of sugar prices, as well as other matters that are related to the cost of food in this country. The report has not yet come forward indicating the results of those investigations. I will remind hon. members that prior to this parliament a bill was introduced called an anti-profiteering bill which would give a legislative base for action on the part of the government to protect Canadian consumers. It was rejected by the opposition parties.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**INFLATION—PROPOSED FOOD SUBSIDY TO AID LOW INCOME GROUP—GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): I will direct a final supplementary question to the Minister of Finance in the hope of getting some kind of specific commitment from this government. I am reflecting the total dismay of all the premiers who attended the conference recently in Ottawa. Nothing came from this conference. Is the minister considering any form of food subsidy—milk has been referred to and there is a whole range of other items the cost of which will continue to go up—to ensure in particular that the middle and low income people will be able to cope in a realistic way in the months ahead?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): The purpose of the proposed tax cut for 1974-75 was to restore disposable income to Canadian consumers, particularly the lower income groups, in order to compensate them for what has been happening to their family budgets.

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SOCIAL SECURITY**SUGGESTED REVIEW OF PENSION ESCALATION FORMULA—POSSIBLE INCREASE IN BASIC PENSIONS**

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the fact that the yearly increase in the consumer price index is now 12 per cent, and 15 per cent in the case of food, and in view of the fact that the pension escalation that takes place in January is to be only 10 per cent in the case of pensions escalated annually, and about the same in the case of quarterly escalation, will the minister immediately cause a review of the escalation formula so that it will more closely match the needs of our people and be on a current basis instead of in arrears?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the consumer price index is now being reviewed by Statistics Canada. As we must wait for their report I would like to draw the attention of the member on the recent report of the Economic Council of Canada recommending that we continue to use the present index and not different indexes for various programs. Now, the entire matter is under consideration and I hope

that the hon. member will make his contribution taking into account the contribution of the Economic Council of Canada on the matter.

As for other federal programs, I must remind hon. members that they are all indexed. For those that are indexed on a quarterly basis, there will be an adjustment not only in January, but also in April, July and October.

[*English*]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): In view of the fact that apparently it takes time for these wheels to grind out anything, will the government consider, due to the urgent situation facing our senior citizens and other pensioners, an immediate substantial boost in the basic amounts of the various pensions to see our people through this present crisis?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I remind the hon. member that many independent persons who have examined the matter recently have come to the conclusion that, during last year, and during the present inflationary crisis, low income groups have been able, thanks to action taken by federal and provincial governments, to protect their revenues more adequately than other groups of our society.

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INCOME TAX**PROPOSED TRANSFER OF REVENUE TO QUEBEC BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

Mr. Armand Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, in view of the absence of the Minister of National Revenue, I shall put my question to the right hon. Prime Minister.

Since an agreement exists between the federal government and the Quebec government authorizing the federal government to transfer to Quebec the amounts collected in personal income tax by another province, will the Prime Minister tell us why he does not respect that agreement which allows Quebec to demand a huge amount of interest from roughly 20,000 Quebec taxpayers who worked in another province?

[*English*]

Hon. Judd Buchanan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): I will be happy to draw this question to the attention of the Minister of National Revenue and get a reply.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**INFLATION—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO REDUCE EFFECTS**

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that the cost of living has been going up steadily each month since the Prime Minister made his famous statement and the wrestling match he has been engaged in with inflation for the past six months, would he advise the House when he expects to register his first