

Oral Questions

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the question is based on two facts which are not verifiable. One is that it will be a month before the budget is brought down, which the hon. member does not know and neither do I. Second, we will only know tomorrow when these figures are made public.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will recognize the hon. member for a supplementary, following which I will recognize the hon. member for Témiscamingue.

Mr. McGrath: May I direct my supplementary question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In view of the indications in the wholesale price index that we can expect substantial increases in the price of food tomorrow, the proposed date of the adjournment of the House, may I ask the minister what proposals or what measures to bring relief to Canadians the government is prepared to bring before the House before the adjournment?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think that my hon. friend is basing his question on something that is still hypothetical. In any event, it is based on figures that were gathered over a month ago.

Mr. McGrath: On a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I hope the Chair will be allowed to proceed to the question of the hon. member for Témiscamingue, but I appreciate that the hon. member for St. John's East wishes to rise on a point of order.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, my question was not based on a hypothesis but on the facts contained in the wholesale price index and in all the readings to which the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs seems to be blind.

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[Translation]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**ALLEGED REPRESENTATIONS BY QUEBEC ORGANIZATIONS FOR ADMISSION OF CHILEAN MARXISTS TO CANADA**

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I most sincerely thank my colleagues on both sides of the House for their warm greetings. I hope that, this time, I have come back for good. The accident is over with and I do intend to take part as much as possible in the proceedings of the House.

I would like to put a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Did he receive representations from organizations, either in Montreal or anywhere else in Quebec, concerning the admission of 5,000 Chilean marxist immigrants to Canada?

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have not received any such pressures. There have been suggestions from all over the world that some Chileans should be allowed into Canada.

[Mr. McGrath.]

HOUSING**TORONTO—INCREASE IN COST—GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. James Gillies (Don Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the right hon. Prime Minister and it is not hypothetical but actual. During the past year the price of housing in Toronto increased by about 40 per cent. I would like to ask if this is the kind of disruptive fact he was referring to in the Speech from the Throne which he said needed to be assented to, and what is the government going to do about this situation?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is a matter that is being attended to, and I would refer the hon. member to the various statements of the Minister of State for Urban Affairs.

Mr. Gillies: Again I direct this question to the right hon. Prime Minister. I have read the statements of the minister and that is why I am directing the question to the Prime Minister. Because this problem is so serious and involves such a variety of ministries, has the Prime Minister or the cabinet designated one minister to take an interest in and be responsible for this problem and instructed him to bring forth, in a priority sense, some sort of program to deal with this enormous escalation in the price of housing?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is asking a question about the internal functioning of the cabinet. I just want to point out to him that the ministry of housing and urban affairs was set up to ensure that co-ordination was effected by that ministry. In a sense it is a ministry that is more concerned in influencing policies of the government than in carrying out specific programs which very often are within the purview of various departments.

Mr. Gillies: I have one final supplementary, again to the right hon. Prime Minister. Can he tell the House whether or not the government has given priority to trying to bring in some law, some legislation, to deal with the rising cost of housing in Canada at this time?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is one of our priorities and we realize, as does the hon. member, that this is a problem that cannot be solved by the federal government acting alone. That is why we have tripartite conferences. As the hon. member knows, the provinces and the municipalities, either through their zoning laws or through their response to federal programs, are jointly engaged with the federal government in trying to solve this problem.

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FINANCE**INTEREST RATES—REPRESENTATIONS BY MINISTER TO BANKS TO HOLD THE LINE—RATE CHARGED BY GOVERNMENT ON ADVANCES TO CMHC**

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Finance. It has become apparent that the American banking system is going to increase its prime interest rate to 10 per cent. Has