

Oral Questions

Prices Review Board so that it can become a truly effective instrument and bring some relief to the Canadian people?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I cannot comment on the preamble to the question. It is one upon which I am sure members of the NDP would be perfectly able to comment. But so far as the question itself is concerned, I would like to indicate to the House that having set up this board, and having asked various responsible citizens to act on this board, the position of the government is that we want to give it a chance to operate before trying to destroy its credibility in people's minds, as obviously members of the opposition are trying to do.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: In view of the fact that the Special Committee on Trends in Food Prices is now drafting its second report, and in view of the fact that five of the six recommendations in the first report have been ignored by the government to date, may I ask the Prime Minister if the government is prepared to inform the House, and consequently the committee, as to what its policy decision is with respect to the five recommendations contained in the first report so that the committee can get on with the second report?

Mr. Speaker: I am sure the hon. member will appreciate that he is inviting the Prime Minister or someone on behalf of the government to make a general policy statement. I doubt whether this can be done at this time. It should be done normally on motions. The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby.

Mr. McGrath: By way of a further supplementary—

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I might return to the hon. member in a moment. The Chair has recognized the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby for a supplementary question.

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that the government seems unwilling to put teeth in the Prices Review Board—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent:—given the continuing increase in the cost of living, would the Prime Minister at least give consideration to putting a cost of living clause on the \$40,000 a year salary of the chairman of the board so that she can continue to cope?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I doubt whether this question is in order. The hon. member for St. John's East is rising on a supplementary question. He will be recognized for that purpose, and will be followed by the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi who also has a supplementary question.

[Mr. McGrath.]

ALLEGED OPPOSITION OF CHAIRMAN TO PRICE CONTROLS—POSSIBLE MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): In view of the fact that the present chairman of the Food Prices Review Board has gone on record as stating that she is opposed to controls in any form, and in view of the possibility that controls may ultimately be necessary to control rising inflation in Canada, may I ask the Prime Minister if he intends to meet the chairman of the Food Prices Review Board to discuss the terms of reference of the board and perhaps ask her if she is prepared to reappear before the Trends in Food Prices Committee.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Having set up the board, the government does not intend, I repeat, to interfere in the operation of that board. I hope that it will be the will of parliament to give the board a chance to operate before prejudging its action, as it appears to be doing now.

[Later:]

POSITION OF BOARD ON FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Mr. Ron Atkey (St. Paul's): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister which again relates to the Food Prices Review Board. In view of the fact that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs indicated yesterday that the board has begun its work and expected to have its first quarterly report available in the fall, would the Prime Minister indicate whether he or anyone in his government had any indication from members of the board as to whether they are going to comment on the failure of the government to implement five of the six recommendations of the Special Committee on Trends in Food Prices, or will they merely attempt to continue to hide the government's inaction?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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● (1510)

[Translation]

HEALTH

INCREASE IN PRICE OF DRUGS—CONTROL MEASURES PROPOSED BY GOVERNMENT

Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

In view of the recently reported increase in the cost of drugs, has the minister been informed that more than 35 per cent of low income Canadians are unable to have their prescriptions filled and what immediate action can we expect from the government?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate it if the hon. member sent us the information that he seems to have.