

Oral Questions

announcement of the Prime Minister on television implementing controls for other Canadians? Is that when they were finally agreed to?

Mr. Trudeau: I do not usually give the precise agenda of each cabinet meeting, but since the hon. member is so insistent, I can tell him no, the last cabinet meeting before the speech I made on that Monday night did not adopt any order in council attributing or slotting civil servants to any particular places in the range. This was delegated by cabinet to some committee of cabinet, and it was instructed to follow the ranges as we adopted them last July, July 24, to be precise. This year, because we were so late and because the salaries were supposed to be changed last April, I did not myself chair the committee, which considers this individual slotting which I usually do. I referred it to another committee.

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[Translation]

CONSUMER AFFAIRS**REASON FOR DIFFERENTIAL IN GASOLINE PRICES IN VARIOUS PARTS OF QUEBEC**

Mr. Armand Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Could he inform the House whether he is aware that gasoline costs as much as 10 cents more a gallon in north-west Quebec, Gaspesia and the north shore as compared with the south of the province and, if so, could he tell the House what he intends to do about it so that people in the northwest areas and Gaspesia are not forced to pay gasoline at a higher price than elsewhere, while taking into account the cost of transport which is obviously lower than 10 cents a gallon?

[English]

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. gentleman should address that question to his provincial ministers. The federal government does not have the responsibility of setting retail prices, but we have introduced guidelines which affect the flow through of costs, that is to say, the wellhead price of \$8 per barrel through to the final user. At that point the federal government comes into play, and we apply those particular guidelines.

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POST OFFICE**GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS WITH REGARD TO DURATION OF STRIKE BEFORE LEGISLATING EMPLOYEES BACK TO WORK**

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister, and it relates to the postal strike. Can the Prime Minister tell the House how long back-to-work legislation will be postponed? If it is to be a long strike as the Prime Minister said, how long will this House wait before asserting the public interest?

[Mr. Nystrom.]

● (1430)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we consider that freedom of association is also in the public interest. It seems to me that the question as asked by the hon. member is assuming the contrary. That is not our view.

Mr. Fraser: A supplementary question. Can the Prime Minister tell the House just what the government's policy is with respect to the postal strike? Specifically, does the Postmaster General have the support of the government when he talks about a three months strike or, as he said two days ago, a strike until Easter?

An hon. Member: Or a year?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the Postmaster General has the support of the government.

Mr. Fraser: A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is it the intention of the government to starve out the union at the expense of Canadians who depend on the postal service? Has the government adopted Joe Davidson's war cry—"To Hell with the public."

SUGGESTION PRESIDENT OF TREASURY BOARD ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESUMING NEGOTIATIONS WITH STRIKING WORKERS

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the President of the Treasury Board and it relates to the motion under Standing Order 43 that I moved at the beginning of this sitting today. The minister has not been with us for the past two days, but I think he will agree that the resolution of the present confrontation between the union and the Post Office Department is essential to the success of the government's restraint program. Now that union officials have publicly indicated their desire to resume negotiations across the bargaining table rather than by an exchange of insults in the media—this viewpoint was supported by the Postmaster General in the House yesterday—will the President of the Treasury Board assume his responsibility and get the parties together so that this matter can be resolved and the public interest protected? The solution is in the government's hands.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (President of the Treasury Board): Firstly, Mr. Speaker, I was here Tuesday. Yesterday I was at the federal-provincial conference. I think in this situation the Treasury Board has assumed all its responsibilities. We have been at the negotiating table and have worked in close collaboration with the Postmaster General and his officials. We are anxious to resume negotiations and find a solution to the problem, but I think this has to work on both sides. If they want to meet us, I am sure the Postmaster General will agree with me that we are willing to sit down and negotiate with them. I think we were doing very well over the weekend and if we can resume the talks we would be willing to make progress.