

Oral Questions

Can the minister tell the House if it is true that some 27 CN cars labeled "bad order", worth millions of dollars and built hardly more than five years ago, have been abandoned for more than two years on a track near Varennes, in Quebec?

Mr. Speaker: I have the impression that such a question could easily be put on the order paper. The hon. member wants information concerning a situation which apparently has existed for two years already; it seems to me that, in such circumstances, the question could easily be put on the order paper. But, if the minister wants to give a short answer, I will recognize him accordingly.

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, if it took two years to the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe to find that out, he will give me until tomorrow to ascertain if those facts are accurate.

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[English]

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

COST OF FOOD—SUGGESTED FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL PROGRAM TO SUPPLEMENT PURCHASING POWER OF THOSE ON LOW INCOMES

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. In view of the warning of the Director General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization that the world faces a serious food shortage, and in view of the fact that such a disaster will drive food prices in Canada still higher than they are at present, will the government contact the provincial governments immediately to discuss a federally financed program to supplement the food dollars of those on low incomes in this country?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will take notice of the question.

Mr. Baldwin: Ask Barrett about egg prices in British Columbia.

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Will the government at least enter into immediate discussions with the provinces to implement the Food Prices Committee recommendation, which this House has already accepted, for a co-sponsored program to get proper food on the tables of people with low incomes?

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PROVISION OF AID TO WEST AFRICAN NATIONS STRICKEN BY FAMINE

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is addressed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the dire warning from the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization yesterday, has the minister considered any new proposals in addition to those he indicat-

[Mr. Wagner.]

ed when I asked a question about West Africa about a month ago?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have approved further action to help in relieving the very serious food shortage that has developed around the rim of the Sahara because of the extension of the drought.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

ACTION TO INCREASE PENSIONS FOR THE BLIND

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the fact that mounting food prices as indicated by the increase in the consumer price index are particularly affecting people on low incomes—I mention particularly blind pensioners who have not received an increase since 1955—is the minister going to take action to help these people instead of waiting for another five years until his orange paper proves fruitful?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but I missed part of the question. My translation system was not working. Could I hear the question again?

Mr. Marshall: Mr. Speaker, lots of systems are not working. My question was, in view of the fact that the consumer price index increase has particularly affected low income people, particularly the disadvantaged like the blind who have not had an increase since 1954, is the minister going to take action prior to the production of the orange paper in five years to help those people?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that the hon. member may be blind to the facts. The situation is that the pensions the hon. member is referring to come under the Canada Assistance Plan for the most part and this is a provincial responsibility. I understand that the payments have been adjusted on a regular basis by the provinces from time to time.

Mr. Marshall: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will recognize the hon. member for a supplementary, but I would hope we would try to limit supplementaries in the last ten minutes of the question period in order to give more members an opportunity to ask questions. For the moment, the hon. member can ask his supplementary question.

Mr. Marshall: While I realize that some of these programs fall within the purview of the Canada Assistance Plan, would the minister answer the question as to how these people can wait for five years until the orange paper comes out and continue to cope with the mounting increases in the cost of living?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, the federal government is paying 50 per cent of those pensions and it is up to the provincial governments to decide what they want to give.