

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think all hon. members will agree that I have allowed on several occasions a repetition of questions which have been answered by the minister. I was reluctant to interfere because of the importance of the subject matter, but it seems to me that the minister has answered this question several times and that I ought now to insist that if there are no fresh questions on this topic we should pass on to another subject.

An hon. Member: The questions are fresher than the meat, anyway!

Mr. Yewchuk: I should like to rephrase my question, then. The minister has stated that no charges were laid because a study by a royal commission is in progress. I am not clear as to why he thinks this prevents him from laying charges.

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is much I could add to what I said last week on that matter. If the hon. member cannot understand why it would be improper at this time to institute proceedings, now that a Royal Commission has been set up, I do not think there is anything I can say to convince him or help him understand.

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[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

POSSIBILITY WAGE INCREASE LIMITS APPLICABLE ONLY TO PRIVATE SECTOR—SUGGESTION PUBLIC SERVICE WAGE INCREASES SHOULD EQUAL THOSE IN PRIVATE SECTOR

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. As the Minister of Finance is trying to obtain widespread acceptance of his consensus program he no doubt intends that it should apply to all sectors of the economy. In view of the fact that in a written reply to a question asked on May 9 concerning the federal public service and the proposed general wage increase limit of 12 per cent, the President of the Treasury Board stated, as I quote, "The government, as employer, is not subscribing to arbitrary wage increase ceilings in its negotiation of collective agreements", will the Acting Prime Minister tell us whether that statement by the President of the Treasury Board reflects government policy and, if so, whether it is intended that wage increase limits under a consensus program are to apply only to the private sector and not to the federal government?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stevens: Considering that in the same reply the President of the Treasury Board stated that public service wage rates must conform to comparable rates of remuneration in the private sector, and that if they increase by 18 per cent he would endeavour to negotiate an 18 per cent increase, will the Acting Prime Minister inform us whether such a statement means that the government does not intend to set an example in wage increase restraint but will only follow the private sector?

[Mr. Yewchuk.]

Mr. Sharp: I could answer with a simple "No" to that question but perhaps I should add that the purpose of seeking a consensus is to achieve some measure of general restraint. If this applied, it would of course apply to the public sector. If not, I would have to support my colleague the President of the Treasury Board because I do not believe it would be fair to the public service to treat them as being different from the public at large.

Mr. Stevens: A supplementary to the Minister of Finance. The minister has expressed concern about the deterioration in Canada's competitive position resulting from a higher rate of increase in labour costs per unit of output in Canada than in the United States. Considering that the President of the Treasury Board states that in setting Canadian public service wage increases it is the higher Canadian wage scales which are relevant, not the more restrained U.S. levels, would the hon. gentleman tell us whether he, too, is concerned about our competitive international position only in the private sector, not the public sector?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, within the context in which the President of the Treasury Board was speaking, that more than bears the truth and I have nothing to add to it.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

SUGGESTED MEASURE TO PERMIT EMPLOYEES TO PARTICIPATE IN PROFITS

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance a question.

Could the minister tell the House if he is aware of a statement made by Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa that his government is prepared to commit itself to introduce legislation allowing employees to share corporate profits and, if so, could he advise the House whether he intends to table federal legislation aimed at encouraging employers to allow their employees to share the corporation's profits through, for example, tax exemptions for corporations which implement a profit sharing program?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I should first consider the statement of the Quebec premier, but I suppose the question should rather be directed to my colleague the Minister of Labour.

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[English]

ENERGY

OIL—PRESENT OR PROPOSED INCREASED PRICE FACTOR IN SETTING DOMESTIC PRICE

Mr. James Gillies (Don Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. In the ongoing discussions over the establishment of a domestic price for crude oil for Canada, is the federal government taking as one of its parameters the current price of oil in