

think the hon. gentleman could, the weather which crippled our crops in parts of Ontario and the west.

Mr. Baldwin: So it is an act of God, is it?

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, it is because prices obviously increased much faster than the minister estimated or expected that I asked him whether he is going to take any new action. My supplementary question is simply this. Is it still the minister's view, as he expressed several months ago, that the only way he knows of handling the food problem is to ration food?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): That is not what I said, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. gentleman knows. I suggest he is again exercising that selective memory for facts which is beginning to distinguish his performances in the House. What I said was that if the country were to accept a proposal for price controls over food, that might well involve at the same time food rationing, particularly if the problem were shortage of supply.

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Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, may I ask one or two supplementaries. I direct my first supplementary to the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the fact the increase in the cost of living has gone up really disastrously, as I am sure he and every other member of the House will agree, and in view of the fact the rise in the price of food has been particularly high and affects the nutritional level of lower income families, is the government now considering some emergency, even if temporary, measures to halt the rise at least in the price of food?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the government is, of course, considering every way in which a successful attempt might be made to halt increases in the cost of living. In the case of food in particular we hope we will receive some insight from the committee that has been set up and in which members of all parties are participating.

Mr. Lewis: May I ask the Prime Minister whether in the interim, until the committee reports and action is taken by parliament on any recommendations that the committee may make, which obviously is at least two, three or four months away, the government is considering some arrangement whereby a cash payment to pensioners can be made to make up for the increase in food prices as well as, in collaboration with the provinces, some general increase in payments to low income families across the country in order to protect the lives and future of the adults and children who constitute the 20 to 25 per cent of the people in Canada who are living below the poverty line?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is referring to a mix of schemes that would alleviate the hardship suffered by some of the people hit by inflation. The answer that has been given in the Speech from the Throne is that the whole system of welfare, even including a guaranteed annual income for people in certain categories, will be discussed with the provinces in the near

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future. If the hon. member is talking about something even more immediate, I would suggest that he wait until a week Monday night, when the budget will try to alleviate some of these problems.

• (1120)

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will recognize the hon. member for York South on a last supplementary question on his part, and then the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether his answers mean that the government is not now considering some emergency steps in the interim until longer term policies may be developed? Is that the effect of his answer?

Mr. Trudeau: Not exactly, Mr. Speaker. When I referred to the budget, which is 10 days away, the hon. member is, of course, free to consider this as an interim step, but it is conceivable, without going into the details of the budget, that there will be some measure of relief for Canadian citizens in that budget. Of course, I cannot say more at this time, but the hon. member is welcome to take that as an interim step.

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister. As he has said on many occasions that the government would take positive action to curb and alleviate rising prices if it considered the situation were serious enough, in view of the fact the cost of living has been going up at an annual rate of just under 10 per cent a year during the past month and gives every indication of rising at a similarly high rate in the future, does the Prime Minister consider that that time has now arrived?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, without agreeing with the implication of the statistics just quoted, I would say that our position is not dissimilar to that of his leader who said—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: What is your position?

An hon. Member: Tell us your position.

Mr. Fairweather: You are the government.

Mr. Trudeau: What do you say about yours?

An hon. Member: Less double-talk.

Mr. Trudeau: Our position is not dissimilar to that of his leader who says that price and wage controls will be brought in, if necessary.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Speaker, the positions of the two gentlemen are quite dissimilar in that the Prime Minister is the head of the government, has the responsibility to act and has said he would bring in positive measures if the time came when it was necessary. Does he now consider that the time has come for action?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!