

Inquiries of the Ministry

to the strike now, and I have nothing to report.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the crippling effect the strike is having on the economy of British Columbia, involving the lay-off of over 2,000 people in the logging and mining industries, has the government considered any timetable with regard to the various alternatives before it? For example, has the government given consideration to legislation? If so, can the Prime Minister indicate to us what, if any, deadline the government has with regard to possible alternative actions, including actions at present being taken or resorted to by the Minister of Labour?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we are not anxious to introduce legislation to take away the right to strike from any labour movement when it has been given that right by Parliament. Therefore I have no comment to make.

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. In view of the tie-up of 25 ships and the fact that the only problems remaining are non-wage, is it possible for the Prime Minister or whoever is reporting today on behalf of the Minister of Labour to state whether or not top officials from the office of the Minister of Labour have been sent to the west coast to try to bring the parties together in order to resolve this situation which, as I have said, does not involve wages?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we know this, the Minister of Labour knows it, and the House knows that he has been actively involved in finding a solution to this strike. He has found a way of moving wheat. He has not decided it is opportune for the House of Commons or the government at this stage to embark upon strike or lockout-breaking operations. This has been the position of the government and it remains the position of the government.

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**STEEL PRICE INCREASES—INQUIRY AS TO INVESTIGATION**

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the fact that I am informed the Steel Company of Canada has just announced an increase of 6 per cent to 7 per cent in the price of steel, does the Prime Minister intend

[Mr. Trudeau.]

to have an investigation made of this increase either through the Prices and Incomes Commission or in some other way, particularly having regard to the fact that steel prices are usually the bellwether of the whole cost of living index?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): The House knows, Mr. Speaker, that the government has no constitutional jurisdiction to fix wages. The problem of inflation is being acted upon by the government in many ways. The question of investigating price and wage increases has been referred to the Prices and Incomes Commission and it is part of their mandate to investigate such things as the hon. member mentions.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister made a Freudian slip when he said that the government had no authority to investigate wages. I am asking about prices and the relationship of those prices to increased productivity. Could I ask the Prime Minister if he can assure the House and the country that the Prices and Incomes Commission will be instructed to make an immediate investigation to see whether or not the price increase announced by the Steel Company of Canada is justifiable, and whether a report will be made to Parliament at an early date?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we set up the commission under its own authority so that it would not be answerable to the government for each of its actions. It has initiatives of its own and it has indicated that it will investigate the causes of inflation and, if necessary, will link a particular increase to both the wage and price structure. In this particular case the government does not intend to give specific instructions to the commission.

[Translation]

WHEAT**INQUIRY AS TO FURTHER SALES—CONTRACT WITH RUSSIA**

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Has the government entered into any other contract for the sale to other countries of the surplus wheat from the West?

I should also like the minister to tell us, if possible, whether he has persuaded Russia to respect her undertakings of a few years ago concerning contracts signed with Canada?