

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

member of parliament or directly to the department, and if they come from museums or churches etc., it is the policy of the government to fulfil them as far as possible. As far as issuing flags to individuals is concerned, the policy has not as yet been decided.

[Later:]

**Mr. D. W. Groos (Victoria, (B.C.)):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Public Works in connection with his reply to the question asked by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition on the matter of flags. If these flags are to be disposed of to the public, will the minister concerned take appropriate steps to see that they do not fall into improper hands, and that they are not put to any use which is not in keeping with their historic traditions?

**Mr. Cardin:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, and that is why there is a difference between our policy in respect of flags that go into museums and churches and those which are released through individuals.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might ask a supplementary question arising out of that question asked by the hon. gentleman. With further reference to the earlier quotation I read, I should like to point out to the minister that an official of his department said the following in a letter dated February 17:

This department has no authority to sell any government property. The only organization invested with this authority is the Crown Assets Disposal Corporation.

I should like to ask the Minister of Industry whether many of these flags have been turned over, or have any arrangements been made in this connection?

**Hon. C. M. Drury (Minister of Industry):** No, Mr. Speaker, no flags have been turned over. I can repeat the assurance given by the Minister of Public Works that when such sales are contemplated to the general public, those sales will be accompanied by adequate precautions.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** When is it expected that this very difficult question regarding the sale or disposal of these flags will be determined?

**Mr. Drury:** Mr. Speaker, the right hon. gentleman has described this as a very difficult task. Let me say that we are addressing ourselves to it in an efficient way.

[Mr. Cardin.]

**Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question I should like to direct to the Minister of Public Works. Will the requests of the Royal Canadian Legion and other veterans organizations in Canada in respect of the distribution of these red ensigns be given full consideration?

**Mr. Cardin:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, of course we will give consideration to those requests.

**THE CANADIAN ECONOMY****REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION INTO INCREASE IN STEEL PRICE**

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam):** Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the widespread apprehension with regard to the recent increase in the price of steel I wish to ask the Prime Minister whether the government would consider setting up a public investigation into wages, profits and prices in the steel industry, with a view to ascertaining whether the recent increases were economically justified.

**Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think it would be advisable at this time to set up a public inquiry into this matter. We have been making inquiries ourselves of the companies concerned, and I hope to be able to make a statement very shortly on this matter, the importance of which I appreciate. That statement will, among other things, deal with the denial of the validity of certain figures which I used the other day and which my hon. friend himself questioned. I think I will be able to prove to his satisfaction that what I said was accurate. I also believe I will be able to go beyond what I said the other day.

**Mr. Douglas:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Prime Minister a supplementary question. In view of the fact that the other steel companies have followed the example of the Steel Company of Canada and have now increased their prices, does the government propose having any investigation to see whether there is evidence of collusion and a price fixing arrangement among the steel companies concerned?

**Mr. Pearson:** We have been looking into this aspect of the matter, Mr. Speaker, and there is no evidence which would justify the charge of collusion. But we are looking into it.