

Economic Forecast for Current Year

disagreement—and it is an arguable point—as to what is the meaning of what the minister has said. This motion asserts that there is a document and calls for its production, so we are debating—and it is a legitimate debate—the existence of the document. It is legitimate to marshal all the evidence there may be to indicate that what the minister has said does not really deny the existence of a document, although hon. members must accept his specific words, in so far as they are specific. Thus, I cannot give effect to the objection that is taken.

Mr. Pickersgill: I wish to raise a point of order. I listened carefully to what the minister said. He said there was no formal document, and I accept his word at once. There is no formal document. But I did not refer to a formal document. I have asked for a copy of the latest economic forecast. The hon. gentleman has told us he does get economic forecasts every day, and I am asking for the latest information so that we may know what it is about.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Since the minister has risen on a question of privilege and since Your Honour has made an observation in regard to it, may I say I readily agree that if a minister makes a particular representation it must be accepted. But I am basing my argument, first of all, on what the minister said when he first spoke this afternoon and now, more particularly, on what he has just said. In this regard I should like to read again the motion put forward by my hon. friend from Bonavista-Twillingate. It asks:

That an order of the house do issue for a copy of the latest economic forecast—

And the minister has acknowledged he receives such forecasts.

—prepared in the Department of Trade and Commerce in the series substituted for the Canadian Economic Outlook as described in *Hansard* for August 10, 1960 at page 7878.

The minister has not denied that he receives reports which would come within the characterisation of the words used by the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate in this resolution, nor has the minister said, and he was given the opportunity, that the practice followed by his predecessor, the present Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Churchill) is one which he himself has changed. He has not; and we would assume that the practice of the former minister continues to be the practice of the present minister. What did the former minister have to say?

Mr. Macdonnell: Would the hon. member permit a question? I have tried to listen

carefully to what the hon. member has said and to what the Minister of Trade and Commerce has said—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Ask me the question, because I have only got a few minutes.

Mr. Macdonnell: How could the hon. member read this resolution and then go on to say that the present minister did not indicate that he was following a different plan? That seems to me to be refusing to face the words which the Minister of Trade and Commerce used.

Mr. Hees: The hon. member has stated I have not denied it—

Mr. Pickersgill: The minister has spoken already.

Mr. Hees: I follow my own system of working with my department and my economists—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: I think the hon. member who has the floor has not yielded, and he has limited time.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Let us recall, because the Minister of Trade and Commerce did not, what his predecessor said on August 10, 1960 in the statement referred to in the notice of motion which is before us now:

Mr. Churchill: I want to make it very clear that there has been no change in the giving of information by the economics branch to me and the transmitting of that information to the government where necessary. I have asked that monthly reports be sent to me from the economics branch and that periodic forecasts be given to me indicating what, in the opinion of our economists, lies ahead in the few months, or the remaining months, of the year. This has been done.

Is that still being done? Does the Minister of Trade and Commerce say now that that is not being done?

Then his predecessor went on to say:

I found that the report which has evoked so much interest was being issued in March as a forecast for the balance of the year, and as the economic climate changes so rapidly it appeared to me that it would be wiser to have a series of reports—

This is what the minister said he is receiving.

—that would keep a person up to date on economic matters.

It was on the basis of one of those reports that I gave the economic outlook for the balance of 1960 when I spoke on the subject last week. Now, that is what is going on; there has been no restriction whatever in the amount of advice given by or sought from the economics branch of the department. I am convinced that the method that has now been introduced is better and keeps me better informed from month to month as to the trend of economic activity in Canada.

I cannot believe the minister would take the position that he is not following this