

amount is set out at the end of each month. Would the minister be able to furnish the House with information now as to the present situation with respect to those purchases?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing secret about these figures; they are published monthly.

Mr. Diefenbaker: In view of the serious situation of the Canadian dollar and the direction in which it is going, will the minister give that information to the House? I realize, of course, that normally it is only given once a month, but I think he will remember that when I was in office the opposition of that day asked for the information and we furnished it.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I recall those facts very well indeed because I asked for the information. Although a motion for the production of those figures was granted by the House, I do not recall the minister of finance of that time giving them to us when the House was sitting before the election. In any event, I will look into that precedent to see whether it applies.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the minister found it necessary to inject that. I should like to ask the minister whether, when he met with the Canadian Bankers' Association, he was impressed by the words of the president to the effect that if the federal government were a business it would go broke at the current rate of spending?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Bankers' Association is in the business of banking and not in the business of trying to run this country. I disagree with that.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Hon. members will appreciate that we are still on the original question. Perhaps we might try to complete the first round of questioning and hon. members may enter the lists again on the second round.

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AGRICULTURE

TOBACCO—FROST DAMAGE IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO—ASSISTANCE TO PRODUCERS—REPLACEMENT OF PLANTS

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture who is supposed to be in the House today but is not present. I shall direct it to the Prime Minister because it is very urgent. Because of the widespread disaster throughout the tobacco belt of southwestern Ontario and in view of the fact that most tobacco farmers are not covered by insurance against spring frost, would the Prime Minister assure the House that the Department of Agriculture will either give aid to those hit or make sure that a sufficient number of healthy young plants are made available from Quebec and the United States as soon as possible so that a crop can be harvested before the September 15 deadline for autumn frost insurance?

Inquiries of the Ministry

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Acting Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Agriculture is joining in the assessment of this situation. It is too early at this stage to anticipate what action may be desired or required, but certainly the department is staying in close touch with the situation.

Mr. Blackburn: Would the Acting Minister of Agriculture assure us, in the eventuality there are federal funds available, that the government will enter into an agreement with the province as well so that both levels of government will be able to assist the tobacco farmers?

• (1420)

Mr. Lang: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, it would be improper at this stage to attempt to speculate on what measures might follow in a hypothetical situation.

TOBACCO—FROST DAMAGE IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO—SUGGESTED FACILITATING OF IMPORT OF REPLACEMENT PLANTS

Mr. William Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Since the tobacco board is negotiating for the importation of plants from Virginia to replace those lost by frost, will the minister discuss with the plant protection service ways in which they could facilitate the importation of these young plants into Canada?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Acting Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, that sounds to me like a very reasonable suggestion.

TOBACCO—FROST DAMAGE IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO—INCLUSION OF OTHER CROPS IN SURVEY

Mr. H. W. Danforth (Kent-Essex): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the acting minister who has indicated that a survey is to be made of tobacco. Since other major and costly crops are involved, can the minister assure the House that when the survey is made it will cover the total damage and not be restricted to one specific crop?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Acting Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, of course that is what the department is doing. It already has some preliminary information with regard to other crops, some of which it may also be possible to replant in certain circumstances. The question as originally addressed was, of course, solely in relation to tobacco.

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[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

CLOSING OF CIP PLANT IN TEMISCAMING—DISCUSSIONS WITH QUEBEC AUTHORITIES AND BUSINESSMEN RESPECTING REOPENING

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. Minister of Regional Economic Expansion.