

Supply—Finance

on record some suggestions about the 1968 coinage.

Let me say at the outset that I understand that both in the United States and Canada it is impossible to predict the demand for coins. On one occasion I understand some consultants were engaged in the United States to advise its treasury department as to how it should gear its production to meet the expected demand. The advice they gave resulted in the production of about 150 per cent fewer coins than were actually demanded. I am sure the same situation exists in Canada. No one seems to be able to say what forces come into play at any given time which soak up the coins produced and distributed.

• (4:40 p.m.)

With respect to what we usually refer to as the silver dollar I should like to ask the minister to consider, if it is not too late, the minting of a silver dollar with a 50 per cent silver content as a special item, perhaps with a special design on it if there is sufficient time to do so. I understand that next year will be an important anniversary of the establishment of the Royal Canadian Mint and this would be a good way of commemorating that event. I suggest that such a dollar, even if made with the 50 per cent copper-nickel alloy that is used now in dimes and quarters, be produced in time for next year and sold by the mint as a special item, in the form of what we loosely call a proof-like dollar in collectors' idiom, for a couple of dollars a piece. I am sure this would result in a number of these coins being purchased by collectors while none of them would actually be in circulation in the business world. As a result we would have two dollars, one nickel and one half silver, with two different values. So far as I know, none of the proof-like dollars issued as single dollars in past years has ended up as currency. They have all been retained as collectors' items and are issued in a special sealed plicofilm holder.

I think that the setting of a price of \$2 or thereabouts for such a coin would allow numismatists to add to the series of dollars with a silver content and would be a way of celebrating the anniversary of the mint. There is another reason which might appeal to the minister in his intensive search for income for the treasury. This would be a profitable undertaking for the mint which would not only make money from minting these dollars but also from their sale as collectors' items. I think that the practice of circulating such coins in a sealed plicofilm

[Mr. Howard.]

holder should be continued in the future because this would result in a continuity of items for collectors and would also bring profit to the mint.

I do not particularly wish to have an answer from the minister at this time because the decision would depend on the availability of silver and on whether or not it should be used in coins at all. I believe that we should be able to predict within reasonable bounds on the basis of past experience how many proof-like silver dollars might be required and sold, and we should purchase the silver in advance at its present price of \$1.90 an ounce. There is every indication that silver will continue to increase in price in view of its high consumption for space activities in the United States.

The minister is well aware of these facts. However, I wished to make these comments publicly and to expand on what I have written in a letter to him so as to impress upon him the necessity of making a decision in this matter and announcing it at the earliest possible moment in the interests of the mint and of the business community.

Mr. Pascoe: Mr. Chairman, I should like to address a question to the minister as a follow-up to the question asked by the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary. The minister has said that 287,000 silver dollars were shipped to Regina for distribution. Has any arrangement been made for the distribution of these dollars across the province or are they intended only for Regina? I understand there is a great scarcity of them throughout Saskatchewan. I have received many letters with regard to this matter, as has the hon. member for the Okanagan Boundary.

At the same time I hope the minister will answer another question. I have noticed in different souvenir shops both here and in Regina that special mint sets containing a gold \$20 piece which were being sold for \$40 are now on sale for \$72.50. Could the minister tell us the source of these supplies in view of the fact that it is so difficult for individuals to get these sets?

Mr. Sharp: The distribution of coinage is made through the banks which fulfil the needs of their customers. The Bank of Canada ensures that they are made available at various points. The amount available to Regina is presumably the amount that is available for distribution throughout the area served from Regina city.