

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 20, 1962

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

TRADE

EUROPEAN COMMON MARKET—IMPENDING VISIT BY U.K. LORD PRIVY SEAL

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the house will recall that at the beginning of January the government was favoured with a visit from Right Hon. Edward Heath, Lord Privy Seal in the British government. That meeting afforded an opportunity for exchanges of views and gave the government the opportunity to receive from Mr. Heath an up to date account of the course of negotiations for the entry of Britain into the European common market. At that time it was agreed that further such meetings might be held from time to time. I am glad now to be able to inform the house that we look forward to a similar visit from Mr. Heath on Monday and Tuesday of next week.

PRIVILEGE

MR. FISHER—PROTEST RESPECTING ANSWER TO QUESTION ON ORDER PAPER

Mr. D. M. Fisher (Port Arthur): Mr. Speaker, I should like to raise a question of privilege relating to the right of a member of parliament to receive answers to questions. My question of privilege relates to an answer given yesterday by the Minister of Finance, as found at page 1919 of *Hansard*, to the following question:

Has Mr. James Coyne, a former governor of the Bank of Canada, received any moneys—

And so on. This was the minister's answer:

This answer I give on information from the Bank of Canada. The Bank of Canada pension fund is a separate and distinct fund made up of past contributions by the staff and the bank, plus accrued earnings thereon.

This is the key sentence.

It is not the practice to disclose information regarding the details of payments made to individual retired employees out of the fund.

I want to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to *Hansard* of June 28, 1961, where it will be found that part 4 of question No. 423 reads as follows:

4. What was the lowest, highest, and average rate payable under the Bank of Canada pension plan: (a) previous to March 1, 1960; (b) since March 1, 1960?

To that question the Minister of Finance supplied the following answer:

4. (a) As at February, 1960, the lowest, \$7.87 per month; the highest, \$1,145.83 per month. That happens to be the pension of the former governor.

I will not go further with the answer to make my point that last year in answer to a question in this house the minister did provide information as to the pension that was actually being received by a former governor of the Bank of Canada. From his very phrasing he specified who it was and we know with no trouble at all that it was Mr. Graham Towers.

As the minister did that, I feel it is taking an unfair advantage of the house procedure to come into the house as the minister did yesterday and say that it is not the practice to disclose such information. I should like to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider this particular matter, because if an answer on a particular subject is given at one time in a particular way, we should at least have this privilege on a subsequent occasion, and surely we deserve to have information in answer to a similar question given in the same way. Surely there should be a precedent established.

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance): I think the hon. member has overlooked some very essential ingredients and facts in the situation to which he refers. The answer that I gave yesterday to question No. 288 is a correct answer. The question sought information concerning a former governor of the bank, Mr. James Coyne. The answer I gave, on information from the bank, was that it is not the practice to disclose information regarding the details of payments made to individual retired employees out of the fund; that, I am told, is the position.

The hon. member refers to what was said in the course of a debate last June, Mr. Speaker, when certain information was brought before the house concerning the ranges, the high and the low, of payments made to those on pension. This was an illustration of the range within which those payments run, a comparison of the payments available to the governor under rule 17 of a particular by-law as compared with the pension available to him prior to the adoption of that particular by-law by the board of governors, and a comparison of that to the lowest pension paid to a former employee of the bank who qualified for a pension. Those were the observations Mr. Speaker, and that