

• (1420)

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

REQUEST FOR CATEGORICAL STATEMENT ON DATE OF GENERAL ELECTION—GOVERNMENT LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES PRIOR TO DISSOLVING OF PARLIAMENT

**Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister. As a result of the uncertainty which prevails in the country because of the cat-and-mouse game which the Prime Minister is playing by inflaming the four-year election itch, will the hon. gentleman consult with the Prime Minister as to making a categorical statement concerning the date when a general election will be held in this country?

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, a general election has to be held before our term here expires. Other than that, of course it is a well known prerogative of the Prime Minister to call an election when it is in the public interest to do so.

**Mr. Baldwin:** As, allowing for budget and supply days, there are only 28 days for debate on government measures before the end of June, is it the policy of the government to announce its priorities and intentions as to the legislation it wishes to have completed before this parliament ends so that the uncertainty in the country may be at least in part dissipated?

**Mr. Sharp:** Yes, the government has certain priorities. These will appear in the next few days and I am sure will clarify all the doubts that may be in the hon. gentleman's mind.

**Mr. Baldwin:** Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that the government has brought in less than two-thirds of its announced legislation in the last two sessions and the record for this session is even worse, will the government, with the assistance of the opposition, try to improve upon this appalling and atrocious record of incompetence and indecision?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. That question, of course, is not in order.

## EXPECTED DATE OF PRESENTATION OF BUDGET

**Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister of Finance whether the list of priorities the government has for its legislation includes any budgetary measures, including a budget debate?

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I expect to present a budget in the House on the evening of Monday May 8.

**Mr. Baldwin:** You got smoked out. It took a lot of pushing.

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

## THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

REQUEST FOR EXPLANATION OF STATEMENTS IN ECONOMIC REVIEW RESPECTING PRODUCTIVITY AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND COMPARISON OF UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES

**Mr. David Lewis (York South):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether or not the minister's expectation will be realized but that remains to be seen. He is keeping a very straight face. I should like to ask the Minister of Finance some questions which I hope you will permit, Mr. Speaker, arising out of the economic survey he tabled last Tuesday. First would he inform the House on what basis he states in his one and half page sketch of prospects for 1972, the shortest chapter in the book, that he expects productivity to go down in 1970 while in the same brief sketch on the preceding page he expects capital investment to be mainly in machinery and equipment usually acquired to improve productivity?

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member would now be patient and wait until the early days of May.

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, apparently the answer has not yet been prepared for the minister. May I ask him—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Lewis:** May I ask him a supplementary question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member is recognized for the purpose of asking a supplementary question.

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister of Finance the following question. In view of the fact that Table 8 on page 48 indicates that government revenue and expenditure for all levels of government showed a surplus of more than \$900 million in 1971 and almost \$1,300 million in 1970, would the minister inform the House what he meant by the statement on page 47 of that document that these figures showed—I am using his words—a "cumulative movement toward deficit"?

**Mr. Speaker:** I have very serious doubts regarding the acceptability of a question of this kind. It obviously invites debate rather than seeking information. I would think that normally the minister, if he were expected to answer a question of this kind, should do so by way of a statement on motions or under other circumstances.

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, I will try asking another supplementary question. This question arises out of tables dealing with unemployment in the document to which I have referred. Can the minister inform the House why he chose 1969 as the base year with which to compare present unemployment in view of the fact that in 1969 unemployment was 4.7 per cent, and does this mean that the government considers 4.7 per cent as an acceptable level of unemployment?

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, it does not at all. Surely these points are debating points that could be dealt with in the budget debate.