

Inquiries of the Ministry

CHARGING OF FEE FOR ASSISTING PASSPORT APPLICANTS

Mr. W. M. Howe (Wellington-Grey): I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. It has to do with a recent news item in a weekly newspaper to the effect that for a fee of \$5 a certain organization is willing to aid applicants for passports. Is the minister aware of this offer and, if so, what action does he intend to take? This concerns a fee for assisting people to obtain passports.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): I am sorry. Would the hon. member repeat the first part of his question?

Mr. Howe: I referred to a news item which appeared recently in my weekly newspaper. It indicated that a certain Ottawa organization is charging \$5 to assist people to get their passport applications processed in approximately two days. Does the minister or the department approve of a commercial firm doing this?

Mr. Sharp: All I can say is that I would recommend that no one pay money for that purpose.

ACTION TO SPEED UP PROCESSING OF PASSPORT APPLICATIONS

Mr. Max Saltzman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister whether he has taken action to ensure that there will not be the same mix-up in the passport branch this year as there was last year?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): As I have told the House on several occasions recently, we are opening offices in some of the principal cities of Canada outside Ottawa in the hope that this will expedite the issuing of passports, but I can give no undertaking that if the demand for passports increases in the order of 20 or 30 per cent, as it did last year, there will not be some delays. I think it would be quite impossible to handle the peak volume of business and issue passports in the same interval of time as would be required to deal with applications made today.

Mr. Saltzman: Can the minister inform the House whether some of his concern as to the ability of the passport office to handle these applications arises out of the government freeze with respect to hiring new staff?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[Mr. Sharp.]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

INCREASE IN AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. A couple of weeks ago I asked the minister whether his department was looking into the fact that the companies handling automobile insurance were contemplating a general increase in premiums across the board. The minister said his department was looking into the matter. I want to ask him now whether this investigation has been completed and, if so, what action, if any, his department or the Prices and Incomes Commission propose to take with respect to this general across-the-board increase in car insurance rates?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): The answer is the first of the alternatives mentioned by the hon. member; we have not yet completed our inquiries into this matter.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): May I ask the minister how soon he expects to complete the inquiry and whether he will be making a statement in sufficient time for it to have some effect on car insurance rates this travelling season? Does the minister hope he can do this fairly soon?

Mr. Basford: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

● (3:20 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

EXPROPRIATION

ACQUISITION AND ABANDONMENT OF LAND, APPOINTMENT OF HEARING OFFICERS, ETC.

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-136, respecting the expropriation of land, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

Mr. Speaker: As hon. members will have noticed from the Order Paper today, there are a number of motions proposed for the consideration of the House at this time. In conformity with the authority vested in the Chair under Standing Orders, I have looked at these proposed motions and I should like to suggest to the House in what order they might be considered and in what order the House might be invited to vote on them if and when a vote is required.