

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

**Hon. Walter L. Gordon (Minister of Finance):** In the first place, Mr. Speaker, like all hon. Members I deplore and deprecate any increase in the consumer price index. In this particular case, as I indicated in the budget speech and as I have indicated earlier, there has been an increase of 2 per cent over the past year. I would hope that when these figures are mentioned it will be made clear that, as my hon. friend said, the increase is 2.7 percentage points. The hon. Member was very careful to do that. But that works out at 2 per cent over the year. That is the rate of increase that I mentioned in the budget speech. It is also, incidentally, the rate of increase that was mentioned in the review of the Economic Council.

No one condones or is happy about an increase of that kind; but as I have said on other occasions, it happens to be the lowest rate of increase of any industrial country in the world in the last year, except the United States. I can assure my hon. friend that I get a detailed analysis prepared by my Department of the make-up of these increases or decreases month by month. I do not happen to have it this morning, but I had it yesterday when I expected the question would be asked. Naturally the Government watches this closely and continuously.

**Mr. Douglas:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister whether it is not correct that the Economic Council suggested the objective was an increase of 1.4 per cent a year in the price of goods and 2 per cent a year on services, and that actually the breakdown for the 2 per cent to which the Minister refers in total in the commodity index is much higher than the 1.4 per cent for goods referred to by the Economic Council. I want to ask the Minister specifically whether any study is made by any branch of his Department regarding these increases to see whether they are warranted, in view of the profit relationship of the sectors of the economy that are concerned.

**Mr. Gordon:** Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the preamble to my hon. friend's question. The review of the Economic Council, in the model which they were presenting, indicated a 2 per cent increase per annum. It does not make a great deal of difference to the ordinary man's standard of living whether it is in one form or another; the fact is that in the last year on the average, according to the statistics, the consumer price index went up by 2 per cent.

[Mr. Douglas.]

As I have said on other occasions, and as I am sure my hon. friend knows, there are those who question whether the statistical measurements in this index are capable of taking everything into account; and there are people much more qualified than I who feel that the statistical measurements show an exaggerated result. With regard to the hon. Member's specific question, as I have said there are senior officers in my Department who watch movements in prices closely and keep me closely informed on them. As to whether any segments of the economy or any businesses in the country are making too much profit, this of course is not something that under our system of government we can control. This is not a socialist state. We have a system which most people think works pretty well.

#### MEASURES TO ASSIST THOSE RECEIVING LOW INCOMES

On the orders of the day:

[Translation]

**Mr. Marcel Lessard (Lake St. John):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Labour concerning the address he gave the night before last at Niagara Falls, when he dealt with the economic situation in Canada.

First of all I would like to congratulate the minister for having admitted that in spite of two years of Liberal administration there are still 385,000 families whose incomes are less than sufficient. Having admitted this more or less disastrous situation, does the minister not believe that he should ask his cabinet colleagues to grant priority to the measures listed in the budget speech, in order to remedy this situation which exists in Canada?

[Text]

**Hon. A. J. MacEachen (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, at present priority consideration is being given to certain proposals in this direction.

#### INDIAN AFFAIRS

##### OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDY OF PROPOSED CLAIMS LEGISLATION

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. A. B. Patterson (Fraser Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, a copy of which I forwarded to him yesterday. Would the Minister advise the House if it is his intention to give Indian