

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

● (1450)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

FINANCE

REQUEST FOR INDICATION OF PROJECTED GROWTH IN GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT IN CURRENT DOLLARS

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. In view of the fact the Minister of Finance refused five times yesterday to indicate the projected growth in the gross national product in current dollars, and in view of the vital importance of this information to labour, industry and consumers in formulating their plans, will the Prime Minister, as head of the government, provide the House with this information to which it is entitled?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the answers given yesterday by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Hellyer: Can the Prime Minister advise the House if there has been any other Minister of Finance in recent Canadian history who has denied the House of Commons this information, which is usually provided in the budget address and is automatically included in budget papers in other countries, including the United States?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member will permit me to take notice of that question, I will get some historians to track down the answer.

Mr. Hellyer: Is it a fact that the Department of Finance has prepared a secret report on which the budget figures are based, indicating an inflation figure so outrageously high that its publication would affect public expectations, labour settlements and the political prospects of the government?

Mr. Trudeau: No, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that is outrageously high is the smell of the questions.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Trinity will be recognized on a further supplementary, but if hon. members want to ask further supplementaries they will have to wait until we have completed the first round of questioning. The hon. member for Trinity is recognized for a supplementary.

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker, it is not a supplementary; it is a question of privilege. It does occur to me that the Prime Minister might practice being a little more gracious and reasonable if he intends to appeal to the more moderate members of the electorate.

[Mr. Foster.]

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I was trying to practice that advice for one more day, but I should like to indicate that many, many allegations are made in the form of questions such as the hon. member just raised—

Mr. Nielsen: They are made in answers, too.

Mr. Trudeau:—and I would suggest that these allegations, almost all unfounded, are a way of spreading rumours that is deleterious to the democratic process.

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ENERGY

OIL—ACTION TO COLLECT EXPORT CHARGE IF PETROLEUM ADMINISTRATION BILL NOT PASSED

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and arises from his answer yesterday to the effect that if the petroleum administration bill is not passed there will be no authority for the collection of the export charge. In view of the fact there are a great many precedents for taxes having been collected after dissolution because of a notice of ways and means motion having been filed, or even simply by announcing that legislation is to be passed and the tax collected in the meantime, I want to ask the minister what action he proposes to take to ensure that the export charge can be collected by the government?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the opinion I have is to the opposite effect, namely, that if there is a ways and means motion it will die, along with all other measures before parliament, if the government is defeated, and there will not even be a constitutional basis for collecting such taxes.

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister will get an opinion from the Department of Justice because this opinion flies in the face of all the precedents. As a matter of fact, the bill has not been defeated; it is before a committee of the House. I now ask the minister directly whether he is prepared to file notice of a ways and means motion today to extend the present notice of ways and means from June 1 to September 1 or October 1?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. gentleman that we are talking about a notice of ways and means which, like all other proceedings in this parliament, will die if parliament is dissolved.

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the minister whether any one of the oil companies operating in Canada has told the minister that it is not prepared to pay the export charge?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I think they are waiting to see whether or not hon. gentlemen are going to carry out their threat of plunging the country into an election.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!