

Oral Questions

the Anti-Inflation Board and the House has passed the legislation whereby the board will carry out its mandate. I think the board chairman and members will have to determine the role they are to carry out within the statutes and within the regulations that will be provided for them from time to time. As I said, in response to the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby, it does not seem to me it would be useful for me to give interpretations from time to time of decisions or statements the board makes.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, might I ask the Minister of Finance whether he intends to abrogate his responsibility completely in terms of reporting to this House in respect of policies pursued by the board. My question relates not to a decision but to a question of policy. If the minister does not want to answer that question could he tell us whether the regulations to be initially issued under the bill that received third reading yesterday and now goes to the Senate are now ready. If so, why is the government not prepared to issue them in draft form, for example for the provinces to consider and for others to comment upon?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, on the question of reports, the bill provides specifically for reports to the House by the Anti-Inflation Board, and it seems to me that is a sensible course of action. The regulations are not yet complete in a number of respects and depend on the outcome of discussions occurring today with the provinces.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I simply serve notice to the minister that I am sure members of all opposition parties will expect the government, and particularly the minister who reports to the House, to respond to questions in the House with regard to policy being implemented by the Anti-Inflation Board.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: I want to ask the minister whether he is just going round and round in circles, whether the provinces will not agree to commit themselves until they see the regulations and the government will not issue the regulations until the provinces express their views about them.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): With respect to the turn of phrase about going round and round in circles, if the hon. gentleman is referring to himself and his party, I agree; yes, they are.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: I ask the Minister of Finance whether we will get straight answers on whether these regulations will be issued to the public or whether they will continue to be held up on some excuse such as that they must be first presented to the provinces. Is the minister prepared to deal openly with the House and with the country?

An hon. Member: For a change.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I have dealt openly with the House and with the public on all aspects of the program and I will continue to do so. I would just

remind the hon. gentleman, who is a lawyer, that after all we must have royal assent to the bill before the regulations can be promulgated.

Some hon. Members: Nonsense.

INQUIRY WHETHER BOARD MONITORING PRICE CHANGES
PRIOR TO OCTOBER 14—REQUEST FOR REPORT

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, yesterday or the day before the Bank of Montreal, in its monthly review of business, suggested that part of the increase in CPI for October was due to some increases or anticipatory increases by some major businesses prior to the announcement on October 14. Can he tell us whether the Anti-Inflation Board has been monitoring these changes and is it prepared to say at an early date whether that is so?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): With regard to changes that occurred before October 14, of course there was no indication of legal control until that time. However, I have had the attention of the board drawn to the suggestion in the bank reports that changes have occurred since October 14 which might require its action.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): If the minister would remember that the Food Prices Review Board was monitoring a good many prices of commodities, he would have that information. Will he insist to the Anti-Inflation Board that it should be their first priority to monitor these particular prices, and, if so, would he expect to report to the House as requested by the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I would remind the hon. gentleman, with regard to his reference to the Food Prices Review Board, that it imposed no legal sanction whatsoever with regard to any price increases that occurred before October 14. With regard to the priorities being exercised by the board, in response, for example, to requests from various provincial ministers, they have been directing themselves both to certain questions of compensation that are outstanding and to price problems.

INQUIRY WHETHER POLICY STATEMENT BY CHAIRMAN IN
LINE WITH GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance concerning government policy as it affects the Anti-Inflation Board. Since both the minister and the Prime Minister have made statements earlier concerning the early decision of the board with reference to their singling out of particular targets, is government policy in line with the statement attributed to Mr. Pepin "It's their bad luck that they were the first on the list" with reference to any early decision, for example, on the teachers settlement in Toronto? Is it the minister's view that this policy now administered by Mr. Pepin, which seems to contradict everything in the history of Canadian jurisprudence, is in fact the policy of the government?