

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. McIlraith: A supplementary question. I do not want to comment on the continued absence of the Minister of Agriculture—

An hon. Member: Selling wheat.

Mr. McIlraith: —but we were not able to get information from him, and now he is not here. In the *Winnipeg Free Press* of May 13—

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. McIlraith: —there is a report of a statement by the chairman of the wheat board saying that the interest rate is $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. My recollection is that the Minister of Agriculture was unable to give us that information in the house. Can the Minister of Finance find out what the rate is?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I have not seen the news article in question. I doubt if it is an urgent matter, in view of the fact that the report is now four days old, but at the proper time information will, without question, be made available to parliament.

Mr. McIlraith: I should like to ask the Acting Minister of Agriculture a related question. Can he provide the answer to the question I asked the Minister of Agriculture a week ago today as to the rate of exchange used in giving his estimate of the total value of this contract? The minister had taken this question as notice.

Hon. D. S. Harkness (Acting Minister of Agriculture): The Minister of Agriculture will be back shortly and I will bring this matter to his attention.

TEXTILES—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON
LONDON MEETING

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Lucien Cardin (Richelieu-Vercheres): I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Finance. Can the minister report on the international textile conference being held in London and at which I understand Canada is represented?

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance): The conference is not concluded. It was to begin on Monday morning and to continue on the 16th and 17th. When the conference has been concluded and the Canadian representatives have made their report I will be pleased to make a report to the house.

Mr. Cardin: Would the minister tell the house how many countries are represented at this conference?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): As I indicated in my statement on this matter last week, it [Mr. Fleming (Eglinton).]

is a tripartite conference. The countries participating in the conference are the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Canada.

Mr. Chevrier: Who is representing Canada?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I indicated last week that this is a conference at the official level. Canada is represented by senior officials drawn from the various departments concerned, and the leader of the Canadian delegation is Mr. S. S. Reisman of the Department of Finance.

HOUSING

INQUIRY AS TO PROGRESS OF CURRENT PROGRAM

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Frank McGee (York-Scarborough): I should like to ask the Minister of Public Works whether he could give the house an up to date report on the progress of the housing program.

Some hon. Members: Oh, no.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions of such scope are not ordinarily accepted on orders of the day.

Mr. McGee: I should like to say a word on the point of order you have raised, Mr. Speaker. If my memory serves me correctly, with great respect, a long series of such questions were asked by the opposition when housing starts were declining. These questions were entertained and answered at that time.

Mr. Speaker: I may have prejudged the issue, but if it is a general report on the condition of house building under the National Housing Act I should think it is definitely too broad in scope for submission as a question on orders of the day. If it is a question capable of a brief answer, and of current importance, that would be a different matter, but what the hon. member has said has not convinced me.

N.H.A.—REQUEST FOR LOWERING OF
INTEREST RATE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. R. Garland (Nipissing): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question of the Acting Prime Minister. Will the government now give consideration to lowering the National Housing Act interest rate from $6\frac{3}{4}$ per cent to a level more comparable to the $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent interest rate being extended to red China, as has been announced by the chairman of the wheat board?

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I really cannot comment on a news report on which apparently