

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: With all due respect, I am afraid that is a wrong assumption. I would think a question would have to be directed to the President of the Privy Council and it would be for him to decide whether the question ought to be directed to him while he was in the House.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Government House Leader whether his parliamentary secretary learned from the office of the Minister of Finance that the tax legislation which followed the budget would be changed and that he learned this between the date of the budget in November and the date on which the tax change was announced in the House on January 28, and whether the parliamentary secretary communicated this information that the tax change would be made to his constituents in their respective positions.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, since I have no personal knowledge of this I would ask that the question be referred to my parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Speaker: The Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council.

Mr. John M. Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): The answer to the first part of the question, as to whether I received any information from the office of the Minister of Finance, is no. I obtained my information—I do not really consider I should call it hard information but rather an impression—after about two weeks of talking to officers in the various departments while lobbying the case I was trying to make. I came away with the impression that there would be a decision to do something about the tax on boats. Having obtained that impression—and I must say nobody came to me and told me at any time that this matter was in hand or was going to be done; it was simply an impression I had—I communicated to those people who had been in touch with me on dealing with budget Bill C-40 that indeed I had as my opinion, after lobbying the various departments and various ministers involved that there was a chance or a possibility that the tax would be dealt with and that probably it would be changed in some way. I was not able to define precisely and exactly what would happen.

● (1440)

MR. REID—REQUEST FOR TABLING OF CORRESPONDENCE
WITH CONSTITUENTS ON TAX CHANGES ON BOATS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the President of the Privy Council in order to keep the procedure straight. Did the parliamentary secretary communicate this information to firms in his constituency in writing, and will the President of the Privy Council table that correspondence in the House?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, may I call upon my parliamentary secretary to continue this conversation?

Mr. Speaker: I think it might be appropriate to assume that questions on this subject directed to the President of

[Mr. Stanfield.]

the Privy Council are going to be answered by the parliamentary secretary.

Mr. John M. Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the representations that I received from my constituents were in two categories. There were those that were given to me personally when I was in my constituency, those that were telephoned to me, and there was one representation made to me in writing as of December 3, 1974. I replied to that on December 19, 1974. If Your Honour would wish it, I would be happy to table this correspondence at the present moment.

For the edification of hon. members, perhaps I might read from the last paragraph of my letter which deals with the opinion which I expressed. It reads as follows:

I have spoken to the Department of Finance officials as well as the minister, and I understand they are likely to relieve the excise tax against boats, although not on motors. When the situation becomes clearer, I'll be in touch with you again.

The next correspondence I had was on January 30, when I reported to them what had happened on January 28 when the Minister of Supply and Services moved appropriate amendments that had been accepted by the House. If you wish, Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to table the correspondence immediately.

Mr. Speaker: It would be my pleasure to extend that privilege to the hon. member. However, I can only extend it to the President of the Privy Council.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, may I table this correspondence on behalf of my parliamentary secretary.

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FINANCE

PERSONS WITHIN DEPARTMENT WHO HAD PRIOR
KNOWLEDGE OF TAX CHANGE ON BOATS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Finance a question. Who in his department knew that this tax change was going to be proposed before it was announced in the House on January 28, who besides him had that knowledge?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as a result of representations and speeches from both sides of the House, both during the budget debate following the budget of November 18, as well as during the debate on amendments to the excise bill—I think hon. members can check those debates to see that the representations were made from both sides of the House and they were numerous—I asked my colleague, the Minister of Supply and Services, to present on my behalf an amendment on January 28 which relieved the tax from being imposed on boats as opposed to motors. I can say that to the best of my knowledge no advance notice of that amendment was given to any member of parliament, apart from those members who hold office in the Cabinet, who, of course, had to approve that amendment before my colleague submitted it on my behalf to the House.