

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Benidickson:—at this hour of 2.45—3.15, I guess it is—whether or not the article does disclose the fact that the estimates involve an increase of \$383 million as compared with last year?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): The article is short, and I think, now that this question has been raised in serious form, that the whole of it should be on the record. It is headed: "Fleming Present Estimates for '61" and it says:

Record estimates for the 1961-62 fiscal year to begin April 1 were presented to the commons today by finance minister Fleming.

Government spending in the current fiscal year, ending March 31, is already estimated at nearly \$6 billions and indications in today's main estimates for the next fiscal year point to an even higher figure.

The commons awaited the estimates with a great deal of interest to see if they indicate how Prime Minister Diefenbaker is going to make good on his "you ain't seen nothing yet" promise of last fall.

Main estimates tabled for the current fiscal year were \$5,740,168,920, but these have been brought by supplementaries to over \$5.9 billion. More supplementaries are likely.

There is likely to be a cut in estimates for defence, but whether this will be sufficient to overtake the increased spending on other accounts is doubtful.

In any case, the main estimates tabled today for the next fiscal year are certain to have many millions more added through supplementaries before the year ends.

That is the entire article. It does not contain any statement of fact in relation to the contents of the main estimates for 1961-62 which I tabled this afternoon, and I think the Leader of the Opposition owes an apology to the members of the press gallery for his insinuation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: The suggestion that there should be an apology seems to me to be unwarranted. There was no reflection on the conduct of the minister except in so far as it was implied in the question of the privilege of the house which was raised earlier. As far as any statement affecting the press is concerned, this is not a matter where one hon. member has the right to ask another to make an apology.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I was not suggesting that the Leader of the Opposition necessarily owes an apology to the house if he does not choose to make one, but I think he owes an apology to the press gallery.

Mr. Speaker: That is what I understood the Minister of Finance to say, and to my mind it would not be proper to suggest in answer to a question that the Leader of the Opposition should apologize to anybody other than a member.

Mr. Pearson: May I ask the Minister of Finance a question? Does the minister consider that the words "record estimates... were presented to the commons today" to be a statement or a conjecture?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): It was known, I think by all that these estimates were to be tabled this afternoon. The members of the press gallery, knowing that the government carries out its engagements, in my opinion were not doing anything unusual in saying that the estimates were tabled in this house this afternoon.

Beyond that, the article, in so far as it purports to say anything about the 1961-62 estimates, is purely conjectural and nothing else. The Leader of the Opposition at one period in his life was clear enough mentally to see these things.

EDIBLE OILS—INQUIRY AS TO TARIFF BOARD
HEARINGS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Reynold Rapp (Humboldt-Melfort): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Finance arising out of the announcement the minister made in the baby budget to the effect that the government is going to direct the tariff board to examine the low tariff on edible oilseed and vegetable oils.

Have instructions gone out to this effect and, if so, will hearings be held by the tariff board? Are these to be public hearings open to anybody interested in this matter, or will attendance be by invitation only?

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the statement I made in the house on December 20 in introducing the budget I did direct a reference to the tariff board. The reference was directed by a letter to the chairman of the board dated January 3. The board in accordance with its usual practice has, under date of January 11, given notice of these hearings and has sent the notice to all persons of whom the board has any knowledge who might be interested in the hearings. If there are any other persons or organizations who might be interested the board would be only too pleased to be made aware of them, because in such matters the desire of the board is that the notice of the reference be brought to the attention of everyone who may be interested in the hearings.

I have before me a copy of the notice signed by the secretary of the board, dated January 11. The notice quotes my letter to the chairman directing the reference to the board and states:

In a later notice the board will announce dates and places for public sittings to be held for the