

Economic Forecast for Current Year

daily. I receive reports from them verbally and in the form of working papers, outlining for me the economic situation in various parts of the country and in the country as a whole. With that information I am able to advise the government and the government is able to formulate policy.

As I said earlier, since I took over the department there has been published no such document as that for which the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate is asking. As I say, the information from my economists is given verbally and in the form of departmental working papers which assist me in my work as minister. So I have to say once again, Mr. Speaker, that there is no such paper; there has been no formal paper such as that for which the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate has asked. I must simply say that there is no such paper produced, and of course it therefore cannot be produced for the hon. member.

Hon. Paul Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words on this matter. I had not intended to do so, but the reply just given by the Minister of Trade and Commerce is such an unusual one that it cannot be allowed to go without comment. I am sure that when the Minister of Trade and Commerce reads what he has just said he will agree that he indeed made a most amazing statement. It must not be forgotten that when this resolution was before the house yesterday it was resisted by the minister—

Mr. Hees: No, it was not resisted; I just said "Stand".

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The minister says he did not resist it. The record will show that he did.

An hon. Member: He did not resist it.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): He resisted it not only yesterday, but on an earlier occasion, clearly indicating that the government did not intend to be called upon to do what the Prime Minister himself had done in January, 1958.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege, I have been accused of doing something which I did not do. As far as I am aware, yesterday was the first time this motion has come up this year. At that time I simply said "Stand". That is not resisting the motion—

Mr. Pickersgill: Of course it is resisting it.

Mr. Hees:—and a year ago when this motion came up I gave the same explanation as I gave today. I advised the house that there was no such document—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): That is not a question of privilege.

Mr. Hees:—and that therefore it could not be produced.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I have a limited time. If my hon. friend raises a proper question of privilege, that is all right. When a minister says "Stand", that certainly indicates that he has some reservation about the motion. The minister could have risen and said, "There is no such document", and that would have ended it.

Mr. Pallett: He has said it now; does it end it?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): He has said it now, but what I am now doing is examining the validity of that statement in the light of what was said by the minister of trade and commerce who preceded the present minister. No explanation has been given. The minister could have said, "I note what the minister of trade and commerce who was in office in 1960 said with regard to the character of annual reports, but I have not decided to carry on the same practice". That is not what the minister said. He used significant words in his statement; he said, "I see my economists regularly. We have working papers. There is no formal document". However, the words of the minister were such as to leave open the interpretation that the practice laid down by his predecessor is still being followed.

The Minister of Trade and Commerce could have repudiated this; or with regard to the practice as outlined by the former minister on August 10, 1960 and quoted by the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate, he could have said that practice was no longer being observed. I cannot find, in what the minister said, any justification for this house concluding that in the Department of Trade and Commerce there is not presented to the minister in some form—formal, informal, or whatever the minister wants to call it—a report which bears the quality of the kind of report which the Prime Minister, so improperly in our judgment, revealed to this house on January 20, 1958, but having himself established that practice, now estops the minister and this government from denying this house the right of access to whatever documents are now in the possession of the Minister of Trade and Commerce.

In seeking to understand the words uttered by the minister a few moments ago I think we have a right to note what was said by the former deputy minister of trade and commerce who spoke in this city the other day—

Mr. Churchill: No, you have not.

Mr. Martin (Essex East):—who was the one who signed—